SECRETS OF THE SELF

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A PHILOSOPHICAL POEM

MOHAMMAD IQBAL

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CONTENTS

Introduction 9

Prologue 26

I. Showing that the system of the universe originates in the Self, and that the continuation of the life of all individuals depends on strengthening the Self. 34

II. Showing that the life of the Self comes from forming desires and bringing them to birth. 38

III. Showing that the Self is strengthened by Love. 41

IV. Showing that the Self is weakened by asking. 47

V. Showing that when the Self is strengthened by love it gains dominion over the outward and inward forces of the universe. 50

VI. A tale of which the moral is that negation of the Self is a doctrine invented by the subject races of mankind in order that by this means they may sap and weaken the character of their rulers. 53

VII. To the effect that Plato, whose thought has deeply influenced the mysticism and literature of Islam, followed the sheep's doctrine, and that we must be on our guard against his theories. 57

VIII. Concerning the true nature of poetry and the reform of Islamic literature. 60

IX. Showing that the education of the Self has three stages : Obedience, Self-control, and Divine Vicegerency. 67

X. Setting forth the inner meanings of the names of Ali. 75

XI. Story of a young man of Merv who came to the saint Ali Hujwiri—God have mercy on him—and complained that he was oppressed by his enemies. 81

XII. Story of the bird that was faint with thirst. 84

XIII. Story of the diamond and the coal. 86

XIV. Story of the Sheikh and the Brahmin, followed by a conversation between Ganges and Himalaya to the effect that the continuation of social life depends on firm attachment to the characteristic traditions of the community. 88

XV. Showing that the purpose of the Moslem's life is to exalt the Word of Allah, and that the *Jihad* (war against *unbelievers*), if it be prompted by land-hunger, is unlawful in the religion of Islam. 93

XVI. Precepts written for the Moslems of India by Mir Najat Nakshband, who is generally known as Baba Sahra'i. 96

XVII. Time is a sword. 104

XVIII. An Invocation. 108

Afterword
by Mulk Raj Anand 113

INTRODUCTION

The *Asrar-i-Khudi* was first published at Lahore in 1915. I read it soon afterwards and thought so highly of it that I wrote to Iqbal, whom I had the pleasure of meeting at Cambridge some fifteen years ago, asking leave to prepare an English translation. My proposal was cordially accepted, but in the meantime I found other work to do, which caused the translation to be laid aside until last year. Before submitting it to the reader, a few remarks are necessary concerning the poem and its author.[1]

Iqbal is an Indian Moslem. During his stay in the West he studied modern philosophy, in which subject he holds degrees from the Universities of Cambridge and Munich. His dissertation on the development of metaphysics in Persia—an illuminating sketch—appeared as a book in 1908. Since then he has developed a philosophy of his own, on which I am able to give some extremely interesting notes communicated by himself. Of this, however, the *Asrar-i-Khudi* gives no systematic account, though it puts his ideas

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1. The present translation follows the text of the second edition.

in a popular and attractive form. While the Hindu philosophers, in explaining the doctrine of the unity of being, addressed themselves to the head, Iqbal, like the Persian poets who teach the same doctrine, takes a more dangerous course and aims at the heart. He is no mean poet, and his verse can rouse or persuade even if his logic fail to convince. His message is not for the Mohammedans of India alone, but for Moslems everywhere: accordingly he writes in Persian instead of Hindustani—a happy choice, for amongst educated Moslems there are many familiar with Persian literature, while the Persian language is singularly well adapted to express philosophical ideas in a style at once elevated and charming.

Iqbal comes forward as an apostle, if not to his own age, then to posterity—

> *I have no need of the ear of To-day,*
> I am the voice of the poet of To-morrow... .

and after Persian fashion he invokes the Saki to fill his cup with wine and pour moonbeams into the dark night of his thought,

> That I may lead home the wanderer,
> And imbue the idle looker-on with restless impatience,
> And advance hotly on a new quest,

And become known as the champion of
a new spirit.

Let us begin at the end. What is the far-off goal on which his eyes are fixed? The answer to that question will discover his true character, and we shall be less likely to stumble on the way if we see whither we are going. Iqbal has drunk deep of European literature, his philosophy owes much to Nietzsche and Bergson, and his poetry often reminds us of Shelley; yet he thinks and feels as a Moslem, and just for this reason his influence may be great. He is a religious enthusiast, inspired by the vision of a New Mecca, a world-wide, theocratic, Utopian state in which all Moslems, no longer divided by the barriers of race and country, shall be one. He will have nothing to do with nationalism and imperialism. These, he says, "rob us of Paradise": they make us strangers to each other, destroy feelings of brotherhood, and sow the bitter seed of war. He dreams of a world ruled by religion, not by politics, and condemns Machiavelli, that "worshipper of false gods," who has blinded so many. It must be observed that when he speaks of religion he always means Islam. Non-Moslems are simply unbelievers, and (in theory, at any rate) the *Jihad* is justifiable, provided that it is waged "for God's sake alone." A free and independent Moslem fraternity, having the Ka'ba as its centre and knit

together by love of Allah and devotion to the Prophet—such is Iqbal's ideal. In the *Asrar-i-Khudi* and the *Rumuz-i-Bekhudi* he preaches it with a burning sincerity which we cannot but admire, and at the same time points out how it may be attained. The former poem deals with the life of the individual Moslem, the latter with the life of the Islamic community.

The cry "Back to the Koran ! Back to Mohamed !" has been heard before, and the responses have hitherto been somewhat discouraging. But on this occasion it is allied with the revolutionary force of Western philosophy, which Iqbal hopes and believes will vitalise the movement and ensure its triumph. He sees that Hindu intellectualism and Islamic pantheism have destroyed the capacity for action, based on scientific observation and interpretation of phenomena, which distinguishes the Western peoples "and especially the English". Now, this capacity depends ultimately on the conviction that *Khudi* (selfhood, individuality, personality) is real and is not merely an illusion of the mind. Iqbal, therefore, throws himself with all his might against idealistic philosophers and pseudo-mystical poets, the authors, in his opinion, of the decay prevailing in Islam, and argues that only by self-affirmation, self-expression, and self-development can the Moslems once more become strong and free. He appeals from the alluring raptures of Hafiz to

the moral fervour of Jalalu'ddin Rumi; from an Islam sunk in Platonic contemplation to the fresh and vigorous monotheism which inspired Mohammed and brought Islam into existence.[1] Here, perhaps, I should guard against a possible misunderstanding. Iqbal's philosophy is religious, but he does not treat philosophy as the handmaid of religion. Holding that the full development of the individual presupposes a society, he finds the ideal society in what he considers to be the Prophet's conception of Islam. Every Moslem, in striving to make himself a more perfect individual, is helping to establish the Islamic kingdom of God upon earth.[2]

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1 His criticism of Hafiz called forth angry protests from Sufi circles in which Hafiz is venerated as a master-hierophant. Iqbal made no recantation, but since the passage had served its purpose and was offensive to many, he cancelled it in the second edition of the poem. It is omitted in my translation.

2. The principles of Islam, regarded as the ideal society, as set forth in the author's second poem, the *Rumuz-i-Bekhudi* or "Mysteries of Selflessness" He explains the title by pointing out that the individual who loses himself in the community reflects both the past and the future as in a mirror, so that he transcends mortality and enters into the life of Islam, which is infinite and everlasting Among the topics discussed are the origin of society, the divine guidance of man through the prophets, the formation of collective life-centres, and the value of History as a factor in maintaining the sense of personal identity in a people.

The *Asrar-i-Khudi* is composed in the metre and modelled on the style of the famous *Masnavi*. In the prologue Iqbal relates how Jalalu'ddin Rumi, who is to him almost what Virgil was to Dante, appeared in a vision and bade him arise and sing. Much as he dislikes the type of Sufism exhibited by Hafiz, he pays homage to the pure and profound genius of Jalalu'ddin, though he rejects the doctrine of self-abandonment taught by the great Persian mystic and does not accompany him in his pantheistic flights.

To European readers the *Asrar-i-Khudi* presents certain obscurities which no translation can entirely remove. These lie partly in the form and would not be felt, as a rule, by any one conversant with Persian poetry. Often, however, the ideas themselves, being associated with peculiarly Oriental ways of thinking, are hard for our minds to follow. I am not sure that I have always grasped the meaning or rendered it correctly; but I hope that such errors are few thanks to the assistance so kindly given me by my friend Mohammad Shafi, now Professor of Arabic at Lahore, with whom I read the poem and discussed many points of difficulty. Other questions of a more fundamental character have been solved for me by the author himself. At my request he drew up a statement of his philosophical views on the problems touched and suggested in the book. I will give it in his own

words as nearly as possible. It is not, of course, a complete statement, and was written, as he says, "in a great hurry," but apart from its power and originality it elucidates the poetical argument far better than any explanation that could have been offered by me.

1. The Philosophical Basis of the *Asrar-I-khudi*

"'That experience should take place in finite centres and should wear the form of finite thisness is in the end inexplicable.' These are the words of Prof. Bradley. But starting with these inexplicable centres of experience, he ends in a unity which he calls Absolute and in which the finite centres lose their finiteness and distinctness. According to him, therefore, the finite centre is only an appearance. The test of reality, in his opinion, is all-inclusiveness; and since all finiteness is 'infected with relativity,' it follows that the latter is a mere illusion. To my mind, this inexplicable finite centre of experience is the fundamental fact of the universe. All life is individual; there is no such thing as universal life. God Himself is an individual: He is the most unique individual.[1] The universe, as Dr. McTaggart says, is an association of individuals; but we

1. This view was held by the orthodox Imam Ahmad idn Hanbal in its extreme (anthropomorphic) form.

must add that the orderliness and adjustment which we find in this association is not eternally achieved and complete in itself. It is the result of instinctive or conscious effort. We are gradually travelling from chaos to cosmos and are helpers in this achievement. Nor are the members of the association fixed; new members are ever coming to birth to co-operate in the great task. Thus the universe is not a completed act; it is still in the course of formation. There can be no complete truth about the universe, for the universe has not yet become 'whole.' The process of creation is still going on, and man too takes his share in it, inasmuch as he helps to bring order into at least a portion of the chaos. The Koran indicates the possibility of other creators than God.[1]

"Obviously, this view of man and the universe is opposed to that of the English Neo-Hegelians as well as to all forms of pantheistic Sufism which regard absorption in a universal life or soul as the final aim and salvation of man.[2] The moral and religious ideal of man is not self-negation but self-affirmation, and he attains to this ideal by becoming more and more individual, more and more unique. The Prophet said, '*Takhallaqu bi-*

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1. Koran, ch. 23, v. 14; "Blessed is God, the best of those who create."
2. Cf. his note on "Islam and Mysticism" (*The New Era*, 1916, p. 250).

Aklaq Allah,' 'Create in yourself the attributes of God.' Thus man becomes unique by becoming more and more like the most unique Individual. What then is life? It is individual: its highest form, so far, is the Ego (Khudi) in which the individual becomes a self-contained exclusive centre. Physically as well as spiritually man is a self-contained centre, but he is not yet a complete individual. The greater his distance from God, the less his individuality. He who comes nearest to God is the completest person. Not that he is finally absorbed in God. On the contrary, he absorbs God into himself.[1]

The true person not only absorbs the world of matter; by mastering it he absorbs God Himself into his Ego. Life is a forward assimilative move-

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1. Here Iqbal adds: "Maulana Rumi has very beautifully expressed this idea. The Prophet, when a little boy, was once lost in the desert. His nurse Halima was almost beside herself with grief, but while roaming the desert in search of the boy she heard a voice saying :

   'Do not grieve, he will not be lost to thee;
   Nay, the whole world will be lost in him.'

   The true individual cannot be lost in the world; it is the world that is lost in him I go a step further and say, prefixing a new half-verse to a hemistitch of Rumi (Transl. 1. 1325) :

   In his will that which God wills becomes lost:
   'How shall a man believe this saying?' "

ment. It removes all obstructions in its march by assimilating them. Its essence is the continual creation of desires and ideals, and for the purpose of its preservation and expansion it has invented or developed out of itself certain instruments, *e.g.* senses, intellect, etc., which help it to assimilate obstructions.[1] The greatest obstacle in the way of life is matter, Nature; yet Nature is not evil, since it enables the inner powers of life to unfold themselves.

"The Ego attains to freedom by the removal of all obstructions in its way It is partly free, partly determined,[2] and reaches fuller freedom by approaching the Individual who is most free—God. In one word, life is an endeavour for freedom.

2. The Ego and Continuation of Personality

"In man the centre of life becomes an Ego or Person Personality is a state of tension and can continue only if that state is maintained. If the state of tension is not maintained, relaxation will ensue. Since personality, or the state of tension is the most valuable achievement of man, he should see that he does not revert to a state of relaxation. That which tends to maintain the state

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1 Transl. 1 289 foll.

2 According to the Tradition, "The true Faith is between predestination and freewill "

of tension tends to make us immortal. Thus the idea of personality gives us a standard of value: it settles the problem of good and evil. That which fortifies personality is good, that which weakens it is bad. Art,[1] religion, and ethics[2] must be judged from the standpoint of personality. My criticism of Plato[3] is directed against those philosophical systems which hold up death rather than life as their ideal—systems which ignore the greatest obstruction to life, namely matter, and teach us to run away from it instead of absorbing it.

"As in connexion with the question of the freedom of the Ego we have to face the problem of matter, similarly in connexion with its immortality we have to face the problem of time.[4] Bergson

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1. Transl. 673 foll. In a note on "Our Prophet's criticism of contemporary Arabian poetry" (*The New Era*, 1916, p 251) Iqbal writes. "The ultimate end of all human activity is Life—glorious, powerful, exuberant. All human art must be subordinated to this final purpose, and the value of everything must be determined in reference to its life-yielding capacity. The highest art is that which awakens our dormant will-force and nerves us to face the trials of life manfully. All that brings drowsiness and makes us shut our eyes to Reality around, on the mastery of which alone Life depends, is a Message of decay and death. There should be no opium-eating in Art The dogma of Art for the sake of Art is a clever invention of decadence to cheat us out of life and power."
2. *Ibid* 1. 537 foll.
3. *Ibid*. 1, 631 foll.
4. *Ibid*. 1. 1531 foll.

has taught us that time is not an infinite line (in the spatial sense of the word 'line') through which we must pass whether we wish it or not. This idea of time is adulterated. Pure time has no length Personal immortality is an aspiration: you can have it if you make an effort to achieve it. It depends on our adopting in this life modes of thought and activity which tend to maintain the state of tension Buddhism, Persian Sufism and allied forms of ethics will not serve our purpose. But they are not wholly useless, because after periods of great activity we need opiates, narcotics, for some time. These forms of thought and action are like nights in the days of life. Thus, if our activity is directed towards the maintenance of a state of tension, the shock of death is not likely to affect it. After death there may be an interval of relaxation, as the Koran speaks of a *barzakh*, or intermediate state, which lasts until the Day of Resurrection.[1] Only those Egos will survive this state of relaxation who have taken good care during the present life. Although life abhors repetition in its evolution, yet on Bergson's principles the resurrection of the body too, as Wildon Carr says, is quite possible. By breaking up time into moments we spatialise it and then find difficulty in getting over it. The true nature of time is reached when

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1. Koran ch 23, v 102.

we look into our deeper self.[1] Real time is life itself, which can preserve itself by maintaining that particular state of tension (personality) which it has so far achieved. We are subject to time so long as we look upon time as something spatial. Spatialised time is a fetter which life has forged for itself in order to assimilate the present environment. In reality we are timeless, and it is possible to realise our timelessness even in this life. This revelation, however, can be momentary only.

3. The Education of the Ego

"The Ego is fortified by love (*ishq*).[2] This word is used in a very wide sense and means the desire to assimilate, to absorb. Its highest form is the creation of values and ideals and the endeavour to realise them. Love individualises the love as well as the beloved. The effort to realise the most unique individuality individualises the seeker and implies the individuality of the sought, for nothing else would satisfy the nature of the seeker. As love fortifies the Ego, asking (*su'al*) weakens it.[3] All that is achieved without personal effort comes under *su'al*. The son of a

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1. Transl. 1. 1549 foll.
2 *Ibid*. 1. 323 foll.
3. Transl. 1. 435 foll.

rich man who inherits his father's wealth is an 'asker' (beggar); so is everyone who thinks the thoughts of others. Thus, in order to fortify the Ego we should cultivate love, *i.e.* the power of assimilative action, and avoid all forms of 'asking,' *i.e.* inaction. The lesson of assimilative action is given by the life of the Prophet, at least to a Mohammedan.

"In another part of the poem[1] I have hinted at the general principles of Moslem ethics and have tried to reveal their meaning in connexion with the idea of personality. The Ego in its movement towards uniqueness has to pass through three stages:

(a) Obedience to the Law.
(b) Self-control, which is the highest form of self-consciousness or Ego-hood.[2]
(c) Divine Vicegerency.[3]

"This (divine vicegerency, *niyabat-i-ilahi*) is the third and last stage of human development on earth. The *na'ib* (vicegerent) is the vicegerent of God on earth. He is the completest Ego, the goal of humanity,[4] the acme of life both in mind and

1. *Ibid*, 1. 815 foll.
2. *Ibid*., 1. 849 foll
3. *Ibid*., 1. 893 foll
4. Man already possesses the germ of vicegerency, as God says in the Koran (ch. 2, v 28): "Lo, I will appoint a *khalifa* (vicegerent) on the earth " Cf. Transl. 1. 434.

body; in him the discord of our mental life becomes a harmony. The highest power is united in him with the highest knowledge. In his life, thought and action, instinct and reason, become one. He is the last fruit of the tree of humanity, and all the trials of a painful evolution are justified because he is to come at the end. He is the real ruler of mankind; his kingdom is the kingdom of God on earth. Out of the richness of his nature he lavishes the wealth of life on others, and brings them nearer and nearer to himself. The more we advance in evolution, the nearer we get to him. In approaching him we are raising ourselves in the scale of life. The development of humanity both in mind and body is a condition *precedent to his birth. For the present he is a* mere ideal; but the evolution of humanity is tending towards the production of an ideal race of more or less unique individuals who will become his fitting parents. Thus the Kingdom of God on earth means the democracy of more or less unique individuals, presided over by the most unique individual possible on this earth. Nietzsche had a glimpse of this ideal race, but his atheism and aristocratic prejudices marred his whole conception."[1]

1. Writing of Muslim Democracy in *The New Era*, 1916, p. 251, Iqbal says: "The Democracy of Europe—fear overshadowed by socialistic agitation and anarchical—

Every one, I suppose, will acknowledge that the substance of the *Asrar-i-Khudi* is striking enough to command attention. In the poem, naturally, this philosophy presents itself under a different aspect. Its audacity of thought and phrase is less apparent, its logical brilliancy dissolves in the glow of feeling and imagination, and it wins the heart before taking possession of the mind. The artistic quality of the poem is remarkable when we consider that its language is not the author's own. I have done my best to preserve as much of this as a literal prose translation would allow. Many passages of the original are poetry of that kind that, once read, is not easily forgotten, *e.g.* the description of the Ideal Man as a deliverer for whom the world is waiting, and the noble invocation which brings the book

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originated mainly in the economic regeneration of European societies. Nietzsche, however, abhors this 'rule of the herd' and, hopeless of the plebeian, he bases all higher culture on the cultivation and growth of an Aristocracy of Supermen. But is the plebeian so absolutely hopeless? The democracy of Islam did not grow out of the extension of economic opportunity; it is a spiritual principle based on the assumption that every human being is a centre of latent power, the possibilities of which can be developed by cultivating a certain type of character. Out of the plebeian material Islam has formed men of the noblest type of life and power. Is not, then, the Democracy of early Islam an experimental refutation of the ideas of Nietzsche?"

to an end. Like Jalalu'ddin Rumi, Iqbal is fond of introducing fables and apologues to relieve the argument and illustrate his meaning with more force and point than would be possible otherwise.

On its first appearance the *Asrar-i-Khudi* took by storm the younger generation of Indian Moslems, "Iqbal," wrote one of them, "has come amongst us as a Messiah and has stirred the dead with life." It remains to be seen in what direction the awakened ones will march. Will they be satisfied with a glorious but distant vision of the City of God, or will they adapt a new doctrine to other ends than those which its author has in view? Notwithstanding that he explicitly denounces the idea of nationalism, his admirers are already protesting that he does not mean what he says.

How far the influence of his work will ultimately go I will not attempt to prophesy. It has been said of him that "he is a man of his age and a man in advance of his age; he is also a man in disagreement with his age." We cannot regard his ideas as typical of any section of his coreligionists. They involve a radical change in the Moslem mind, and their real importance is not to be measured by the fact that such a change is unlikely to occur within a calculable time.

PROLOGUE

WHEN the world-illuming sun rushed
  upon Night like a brigand,
My weeping bedewed the face of the rose.
My tears washed away sleep from the eye of
  the narcissus,
My passion wakened the grass and made it grow.
The Gardener tried the power of my song, 5
He sowed my verse and reaped my tears
And wove my lament with the garden, as warp
  and woof.
Tho' I am but a mote, the radiant sun is mine:
Within my bosom are a hundred dawns.
My dust is brighter than Jamshid's Cup,[1] 10
It knows things that are yet unborn in the
  world.
My thought hunted down and slung from the
  saddle a deer
That has not yet leaped forth from the covert
  of non-existence.
Fair is my garden, as yet the leaves are green: 15

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1. Jamshid, one of the mythical Persian kings, is said to have possessed a marvellous cup in which the whole world was displayed to him.

Unborn roses are hidden in the skirt of my
garment.
I struck dumb the musicians where they were
gathered together,
I smote the heart-string of the universe,
Because the lute of my genius hath a rare
melody:
Even to comrades my song is strange 20
I am born in the world as a new sun,
I have not learned the ways and
fashions of the sky:
Not yet have the stars filed before my splendour,
Not yet in my quicksilver astri;
Untouched is the sea by my dancing rays, 25
Untouched are the mountains by my crimson
hue.
The eye of existence is not familiar with me
I rise trembling, afraid to show myself;
From the East my dawn arrived and routed
night,
A fresh dew settled on the rose of the world 30
I am waiting for the votaries that rise at dawn :
Oh, happy they who shall worship my fire !
I have no need of the ear of To-day,
I am the voice of the poet of To-morrow.
My own age does not understand my
deep meanings, 35
My Joseph is not for this market.
I despair of my old companions,
My Sinai burns for the sake of the Moses who is

coming.
Their sea is silent, like dew,
But my dew is storm-ridden, like the ocean. 40
My song is of another world than theirs :
This bell calls other travellers to take the road.
Many a poet born after his death,
Opened our eyes when his own were closed,
And journeyed forth again from nothingness, 45
Like roses blossoming o'er the earth of his grave.
Albeit caravans have passed through this desert.
They passed, as a camel steps, with little sound.
Receive my lighting, if thou art a Sinai.
The Fountain of Life hath been given me to drink.
I have been made an adept of the mystery of Life.
The speck of dust was vitalised by my burning song : 65
It unfolded wings and became a firefly.
None hath told the secret which I will tell
Or threaded a pearl of thought like mine.
Come, if thou would'st know the secret of everlasting life !
Come, if thou would'st win both earth and heaven ! 70
Heaven taught me this lore,

I cannot hide it from my comrades.
O Saki ! arise and pour wine into the cup,
Clear the vexation of Time from my heart !
The sparkling liquor that flows from
Zemzem[1] 75
Were a beggar to worship it, he would become
a king.
It makes thought more sober and wise,
It makes the keen eye keener,
It gives to a straw the weight of a mountain,
And to foxes the strength of lions. 80
It causes dust to soar to the Pleiades
And a drop of water swell to the breadth of
the sea.
It turns silence into the din of Judgment Day,
It makes the foot of the partridge red with blood
of the hawk.
Arise and pour pure wine into my cup, 85
Pour moonbeams into the dark night of my
thought,
That I may lead home the wanderer
And imbue the idle looker-on with restless
impatience ;
And advance hotly on a new quest
And become known as the champion of a
new spirit ; 90
And be to people of insight as the pupil to
the eye.

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1. The holy well at Mecca.

And sink into the ear of the world, like a voice ;
And exalt the worth of Poesy[1]
And sprinkle the dry herbs with my tears !
Inspired by the genius of the Master
of Rum[2] 95
I rehearse the sealed book of secret lore.
His soul is the flaming furnace,
I am but as the spark that gleams for a moment.
His burning candle consumed me, the moth;
His wine overwhelmed my goblet. 100
The Master of Rum transmuted my earth to gold
And set my ashes aflame.
The grain of sand set forth from the desert,
That it might win the radiance of the sun.
I am a wave and I will come to rest in his
sea, 105
That I may make the glistening pearl mine own.
I who am drunken with the wine of his song
Draw life from the breath of his words;
'T was night: my heart would fain lament,
The silence was filled with my cries to God. 110

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1. Iqbal means to say that he will raise the value of this poetry by putting his deepest aspirations into it. The metaphor refers to the practice of herbs-sellers who sprinkle water on their herbs in order to make them heavier and fetch more money.
2. Jalaluddin Rumi, the greatest mystical poet of Persia (A.D. 1207-1273). Most of his life was passed at Iconium in Galatia, for which reason he is generally known as "Rummi" i e. "the Anatolian".

I was complaining of the sorrows of the world
And bewailing the emptiness of my cup.
At last mine eye could endure no more,
Broken with fatigue it went to sleep.
There appeared the Master, formed in the mould
of Truth 115
Who wrote the Koran in Persian.[1]
He said, "O frenzied lover,
Take a draught of love's pure wine,
Strike the chord of thine heart and rouse a
tumultuous strain,
Dash thine head against the goblet and thine eye
against the lancet! 120
Make thy laughter the source of a hundred sighs,
Make the hearts of men bleed with thy tears!
How long wilt thou be silent, like a bud?
Sell thy fragrance cheap, like the rose!
Tongue-tied, thou art in pain:
Cast thyself upon the fire, like rue![2] 125
Like the bell, break silence at last, and from
every limb
Utter forth a lamentation!
Thou art fire: fill the world with thy glow!
Make others burn with thy burning! 130
Proclaim the secrets of the old wine-seller.[3]

1. This refers to the famous *masnavi* of Jalalu'ddin Rumi.
2. Rue-seed, which is burned for the purpose of fumigation, crackles in the fire.
3. "Wine" signifies the mysteries of divine love.

Be thou a surge of wine, and the crystal cup
thy robe!
Shatter the mirror of fear,
Break the bottles in the bazaar!
Like the reed-flute, bring a message from the
reed-bed; 135
Give to Majnun a message from the tribe of
Laila.[1]
Create a new style for thy song,
Enrich the assembly with thy piercing strains!
Up, and re-inspire every living soul!
Say "Arise!" and by that word quicken the
living! 140
Up, and set thy feet on another path;
Put aside the passionate melancholy of old!
Become familiar with the delight of singing;
"O bell of the caravan, awake!"
At these words my bosom was enkindled 145
And swelled with emotion like the flute;
I rose like music from the string
To prepare a Paradise for the ear.
I unveiled the mystery of the Self
And disclosed its wondrous secret. 150
My being was as an unfinished statue,
Uncomely, worthless, good for nothing.
Love chiselled me: I became a man
And gained knowledge of the nature of the
universe.

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1. Majnun is the Orland. Furioso of Arabia.

I have seen the movement of the sinews of the sky, 155
And the blood coursing in the veins of the moon.
Many a night I wept for Man's sake
That I might tear the veil from Life's mysteries,
And extract the secret of Life's constitution.
From the laboratory of phenomena 160
I who give beauty to this night, like the moon,
Am as dust in devotion to the pure Faith (Islam)—
A faith renowned in hill and dale,
Which kindles in men's hearts a flame of undying song:
It sowed an atom and reaped a sun, 165
It harvested a hundred poets like Rumi and Attar.
I am a sigh; I will mount to the heavens;
I am but smoke, yet am I sprung of fire.
Driven onward by high thoughts, my pen
Cast abroad the secret behind this veil,
That the drop may become co-equal with the sea
And the grain of sand grow into a Sahara.
Poetising is not the aim of this *masnavi*,
Beauty-worshipping and love-making is not its aim.
I am of India; Persian is not my native tongue; 175
I am like the crescent moon; my cup is not full.

Do not seek from me charm of style in exposition,
Do not seek from me Khansar and Isfahan.[1]
Although the language of Hind is sweet as sugar,
Yet sweeter is the fashion of Persian speech. 180

My mind was enchanted by its loveliness,
My pen became as a twig of the Burning Bush.
Because of the loftiness of my thoughts,
Persian alone is suitable to them.
O Reader! do not find fault with the wine-cup, 185
But consider attentively the taste of the wine.

I

Showing that the system of the universe originates in the Self, and that the continuation of the life of all individuals depends on strengthening the Self.

THE form of existence is an effect of the Self,
Whatsoever thou seest is a secret of the Self,
When the Self awoke to consciousness,
It revealed the universe of Thought. 190

A hundred words are hidden in its essence;
Self-affirmation brings Not-self to light.
By the Self the seed of opposition is sown in the

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1. Khansar, which lies about a hundred miles north-west of Isfahan, was the birth-place of several Persian poets.

world !
It imagines itself to be other than itself.
It makes from itself the forms of others 195
In order to multiply the pleasure of strife.
It is slaying by strength of its arm
That it may become conscious of its own strength.
Its self-deceptions are the essence of Life;
Like the rose, it lives by bathing itself in blood. 200
For the sake of a single rose it destroys a hundred rose-gardens
And makes a hundred lamentations in quest of a single melody.
For one sky it produces a hundred new moons,
And for one word a hundred discourses.
The excuse for this wastefulness and cruelty, 205
Is the shaping and perfecting of spiritual beauty.
The loveliness of Shirin justifies the anguish of Farhad.[1]
One fragrant navel justifies a hundred musk-deer
'Tis the fate of moths to consume in flame;
The suffering of moths is justified by the candle. 210

1 Shirin was loved by the Persian emperor Khusrau Parwiz. Farhad fell in love with her and cast himself down a precipice on hearing a false rumour of her death.

The pencil of the Self dimmed a hundred to-days,
In order to achieve the dawn of a single morrow.
Its flames burned a hundred Abrahams,[1]
That the lamp of one Mohammed might be
lighted.
Subject, object, means, and causes 215
All these are forms which it assumes for the
purpose of action.
The Self rises, kindles, falls, glows, breathes,
Burns, shines, walks and flies.
The spaciousness of Time is its arena,
Heaven is a billow of the dust on its road. 220
From its rose-planting the world abounds in
roses ;
Night is born of its sleep, day springs from its
waking.
It divided its flame into sparks
And taught the understanding to worship
particulars.
It dissolved itself and created the atoms. 225
It was scattered for a little while and created
the sands.
Then it wearied of dispersion,
And by re-uniting itself it became the mountains.
'Tis the nature of the Self to manifest itself;
In every atom slumbers the might of
the Self. 230

---

1. Abraham is said to have been cast on a burning pile by order of Nimrod and miraculously preserved from harm.

Power that it expressed and inert
Chains the faculties which lead to action.
Inasmuch as the life of the universe comes from
the power of the Self,
Life is in proportion to this power.
When a drop of water gets the Self's lesson by
heart, 235
It makes its worthless existence a pearl.
Wine is formless because its self is weak;
It receives a form by favour of the cup.
Although the cup of wine assumes a form,
It is indebted to us for its motion.
When the mountain loses its self, it turns into
sands
And complains that the sea surges over it;
The wave, so long as it remains a wave in the
sea's bosom[1]
Makes itself a rider on the sea's back.
Light transformed itself into an eye 245
And moved to and fro in search of beauty;
When the grass found a means of growth in itself,
Its aspiration clove the breast or the garden.
The candle too concatenated itself
And built itself out of atoms; 250
Then it made a practice of melting itself away
and fled from its self
Until at last it trickled down from its own eye,
like tears.

---

1. i e. so long as it remains a distinct individual.

If the bezel had been more self-secure by nature,
It would not have suffered wounds,
But since it derives its value from the
superscription, 255
Its shoulder is galled by the burden of another's
name.
Because the earth is firmly based on itself,
The captive moon goes round it perpetually.
The being of the sun is stronger than that of
the earth;
Therefore is the earth fascinated by the sun's
eye. 260
The glory of the red beech fixes our gaze,
The mountains are enriched by its majesty;
Its raiment is woven of fire,
Its origin is one self-assertive seed.
When Life gathers strength from the Self, 265
The river of Life expands into an ocean.

II

Showing that the life of the Self comes from forming ideals and bringing them to birth.

LIFE is preserved by purpose;
Because of the goal its caravan-bell tinkles.
Life is latent in seeking,
Its origin is hidden in desire 270
Keep desire alive in thy heart
Lest thy little dust become a tomb.

Desire is the soul of this world of hue and scent,
The nature of everything is a store-house of
desire.
Desire sets the heart dancing in the breast, 275
And by its glow the breast is made bright
as a mirror.
It gives to earth the power of soaring,
It is a Khizr to the Moses of Perception.[1]
From the flame of desire the heart takes life,
And when it takes life, all dies that is
not true. 280
When it refrains from forming desires,
Its pinion breaks and it cannot soar.
Desire keeps the Self in perpetual uproar.
It is a restless wave of the Self's sea.
Desire is a noose for hunting ideals, 285
A binder of the book of deeds.
Negation of desire is death to the living,
Even as absence of heat extinguishes the flame.
What is the source of our wakeful eyes ?
Our delight in seeing hath taken visible
shape, 290
The patridge's leg is derived from the
elegance of its gait,
The nightingale's beak from its endeavour
to sing.

1. Cf. Koran, Ch. 18, vv. 64-80, Khizr represents the mystic seer whose actions are misjudged by persons of less insight.

Away from the reed-bed, the reed became happy;
The music was released from its prison.[1]
What is the essence of the mind that strives after new discoveries and scales the heavens? 295
Knowest thou what works this miracle?
'Tis desire that enriches Life,
And the mind is a child of its womb.
What are social organisation, customs, and laws?
What is the secret of the novelites of science? 300
A desire which realised itself by its own strength
And burst forth from the heart and took shape.
Nose, hand, brain, eye, and ear,
Thought, imagination, feeling, memory, and understanding –
All these are weapons devised by Life for self-preservation 305
In its ceaseless struggle.
The object of science and art is not knowledge,
The object of the garden is not the bud and the flower.
Science is an instrument for the preservation of Life,

1. *i.e.* the reed was made into a flute.

Science is a means of invigorating the Self. 310
Science and art are servants of Life,
Slaves born and bred in its house.
Rise, O thou
Rise, O thou who art strange to Life's mystery.
Rise intoxicated with the wine of an ideal,
An ideal shining as the dawn,
A blazing fire to all that is other than God,
An ideal higher than Heaven—
Winning, captivating, enchanting men's hearts;
A destroyer of ancient falsehood,
Fraught with turmoil, an embodiment of the last Day. 320
We live by forming ideals,
We glow with the sunbeams of desire !

III

Showing that the Self is strengthened by Love.

THE luminous point whose name is the Self,
Is the life-spark beneath of dust.
By Love it is made more lasting, 325
More living, more burning, more glowing.
From Love proceeds the radiance of its being
And the development of its unknown possibilities.
Its nature gathers fire from Love,
Love instructs it to illumine the world. 330
Love fears neither sword nor dagger,
Love is not born of water and air and earth.

Love makes peace and war in the World,
Love is the Fountain of Life, Love is
the flashing sword of Death.
The hardest rocks are shivered by Love's
glance: 335
Love of God at last becomes wholly God.
Learn thou to love, and seek of beloved:
Seek an eye like Noah's, a heart like Job's !
Transmute thy handful of earth into gold,
Kiss the threshold of a Perfect Man ![1] 340
Like Rumi, light thy candle
And burn Rum in the fire of Tabriz.[2]
There is a beloved hidden within thine heart:
I will show him to thee, if thou hast eyes to see.
His lovers are fairer than the fair,
Sweeter and comelier and more beloved.
By love of him the heart is made strong
And earth rubs shoulders with the Pleiades :
The soil of Najd was quickened by his grace
And fell into a rapture and rose to the
skies.[3] 350
In the Moslem's heart is the home of
Mohammed,
All our glory was from the name of Mohammed.

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1. A prophet or saint.
2. See note on line 95 Tabriz is an allusion to Shams-i-Tabriz, the spiritual director of Jalalu'ddin Rumi.
3. Najd, the Highlands of Arabia, is celebrated in love-romance. I need only mention Laila and Majnun.

Sinai is but an eddy of the dust of his house,
His dwelling-place is a sanctuary to the Ka'ba
itself.
Eternity is less than a moment of his time. 355
Eternity receives increase from his essence.
He slept on a mat of rushes,
But the crown of Chosroes was under his
people's feet.
He chose the nightly solitude of Mount Hira,
And he founded a state and laws and
government. 360
He passed many a night with sleepless eyes.
In order that the Moslems might sleep on the
throne of Persia.
In the hour of battle, iron was melted by the
flash at his sword;
In the hour of prayer, tears fell like rain from
his eyes
When he prayed for Divine help, his
sword answered "Amen" 365
And extirpated the race of kings.
He instituted new laws in the world,
He brought the empires of antiquity to an end.
With the key of religion he opened
the door of this world:
The womb of the world never bore his like. 370
In his sight high and low were one,
He sat with his slave at one table.
The daughter of the chieftain of Tai was

taken prisoner in battle.[1]
And brought into that exalted presence;
Her feet in chains, unveiled,
And her neck bowed with shame.
When the Prophet saw that the poor girl had no veil,
He covered her face with his own mantle.
We are more naked than that lady of Tai,
We are unveiled before the nations of the world.
In him is our trust on the Day of Judgment,
And in this world too he is our protector.
Both his favour and his wrath are entirely a mercy:
That is a mercy to his friends and this to his foes.
He opened the gates of mercy to his enemies. 385
He gave to Mecca the message, "No penalty shall be laid upon you."
We who know not the bonds of country
Resemble sight, which is one though it be the light of two eyes.
We belong to the Hijaz and China and Persia,
Yet we are the dew of one smiling dawn. 390
We are all under the spell of the eye of the cupbearer from Mecca,

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1. Her father, Hatim of Tai, is proverbial in the East for his hospitality.

We are united as wine and cup.
He burnt clean away distinctions of lineage,
His fire consumed this trash and rubble.
We are like a rose with many petals but with
one perfume: 395
He is the soul of this society, and he is one.
We were the secret concealed in his heart:
He spake out fearlessly, and we were revealed.
The song of love for him fills my silent reed,
A hundred notes throb in my bosom. 400
How shall I tell what devotion he inspires?
A block of dry wood wept at parting from him.[1]
The Moslem's being is where he manifests
his glory:
Many a Sinai springs from the dust on his
path.
My image was created by his mirror. 405
My dawn rises from the sum of his breast.
My repose is a perpetual fever,
My evening hotter than the morning of
Judgment Day:[2]
He is the April cloud and I his garden,
My vine is bedewed with his rain. 410
I sowed mine eye in the field of Love
And reaped a harvest of vision.

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1. The story of the pulpit that wept when Mohammed descended from it occurs, I think, in the *Masnavi*.
2. When, according to Mohammedan belief, the sun will rise in the West.

"The soil of Medina is sweeter than
both worlds:
Oh, happy the town where dwells the
Beloved!"[1]
I am lost in admiration of the style of
Mulla Jami: 415
His verse and prose are a remedy for
my immaturity.
He has written poetry overflowing
with beautiful ideas
And has threaded pearls in praise of
the Master—
"Mohammed is the preface to the
book of the universe:
All the worlds are slaves and he is the
Master." 420
From the wine of Love spring many
spiritual qualities:
Amongst the attributes of Love is
blind devotion.
The saint of Bistam, whose devotion
was unique,
Abstained from eating a water-melon.[2]
Be a lover constant in devotion to thy
beloved, 425

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1. A quotation from the *Masavi*. The Prophet was buried at Medina.
2. Bayazid of Bistam died in A.D. 875. He refused to eat a water-melon, saying he had no assurance that the Prophet had ever tasted that fruit

That thou mayst cast thy noose and
capture God.
Sojourn for a while on the Hira of the
heart,[1]
Abandon self and fee to God.
Strengthened by God, return to thy self
And break the heads of the Lat and
Uzza of sensuality.[2] 430
By the might of Love evoke an army,
Reveal thyself on the Faran of Love,[3]
That the Lord of the Ka'ba may show
thee favour
And make thee the object of the text,
"Lo, I will appoint a vicegerent on the
earth."[4]

IV

Showing that the Self is weakened by asking.

O THOU who hast gathered taxes
from lions, 435
Thy need hath caused thee to become
a fox in disposition.

---

1. Mohammed used to retire to a cave on Mount Hira, near Mecca, for the purpose of solitary meditation.
2. Lat and Uzza were goddesses worshipped by the heathen Arabs.
3. Feran, name of a mountain in the neighbourhood of Mecca.
4. Koran ch 2. v. 28. In these words, which were addressed to the angels, God foretold the creation of Adam.

Thy maladies are the result of indigence;
This disease is the source of thy pain.
It is robbing thine high thoughts of their
dignity.
And putting out the light of thy noble
imagination. 440
Quaff rosy wine from the jar of existence !
Snatch thy money from the purse of time !
Like Omar, come down from thy camel ![1]
Beware of incurring obligations, beware !
How long wilt thou sue for office 445
And ride like children on a reed?
A nature that fixes its gaze on the sky.
Becomes debased by receiving benefits.
By asking, poverty is made more abject;
By begging, the beggar is made poorer, 450
Asking disintegrates the Self
And deprives of illumination the Sinai-bush
of the Self.
Do not scatter thy handful of dust;
Like the moon, scrape food from thine own
side !
Albeit thou art poor and wretched 455
And overwhelmed by affliction,
Seek not thy daily bread from the
bounty of another,
Seek not water from the fountain of the sun,

1. This alludes to a story told of the Caliph Omar, who while riding a camel dropped his whip and insisted on dismounting in order to pick it up.

Lest thou be put to shame before the prophet
On the day when every soul shall be stricken
with fear. 460
The moon gets sustenance from the table of
the sun
And bears the brand of his bounty on her
heart.
Pray God for courage ! Wrestle with
Fortune !
Do not sully the honour of the pure religion !
He who swept the rubbish of idols out of the
Ka'ba 465
Said that God loves a man that earns his living.
Woe to him that accepts bounty from another's
table.
And lets his neck be bent with benefits !
He hath consumed himself with the lightning of
the favours bestowed on him,
He hath sold his honour for a paltry coin. 470
Happy the man who thirsting in the sun
Does not crave of Khizr a cup of water ![1]
His brow is not moist with the shame of beggary;
He is a man still, not a piece of clay.
That noble youth walks under heaven 475
With his head erect like the pine.
Are his hands empty? The more is he master of
himself.
Do his fortunes languish? The more alert is he.

1. Khizr is supposed to have drunk of the Fountain of Life.

A whole ocean, if gained by begging, is but a
sea of fire;
Sweet is a little dew gathered by one's own
hand. 480
Be a man of honour, and like the bubble
Keep thy cup inverted even in the midst of the
sea.[1]

V

Showing that when the self is strengthened by Love it gains dominion over the outward and inward forces of the universe.

WHEN the Self is made strong by Love
Its power rules the whole world.
The heavenly Sage who adorned the sky with
stars 485
Plucked these buds from the bough of the Self.
It has becomes God's hand,
The moon is split by its fingers.[2]
It is the arbitrator in all the quarrels of the
world,
Its command is obeyed by Darius and
Jamshid.

---

1. The bubble is compared to an inverted cup, which of course receives nothing
2 Alluding to a well-known miracle of the Prophet (Koran ch. 54 v. 1).

I will tell thee a story of Bu Ali.[1]
Whose name is renowned in India,
Him who sang of the ancient rose-garden,
And discoursed to us about the lovely rose:
The air of his fluttering skirt
Made a Paradise of this fire-born country.
His young disciple went one day to the bazaar—
The wine of Bu Ali's discourse had turned his head.
The governor of the city was coming along on horseback.
His servant and staff-bearer rode beside him— 500
The forerunner shouted, "O senseless one,
Do not get in the way of the governor's escort."
But the dervish walked on with drooping head,
Sunk in the sea of his own thoughts.
The staff-bearer, drunken with pride 505
Broke his staff on the head of the dervish,
Who stepped painfully out of the governor's way.
Sad and sorry, with a heavy heart.
He came to Bu Ali and complained
And released the tears from his eyes 510
Like lightning that falls on mountains,

---

1. Sheikh Sharafuddin of Panipat, who is better known as Bu Ao Qalandar, was a great saint He died about A.D. 1325.

The Sheikh poured forth a fiery torrent of speech.
He let loose from his soul a strange fire,
He gave an order to his secretary:
"Take thy pen and write a letter 515
From a dervish to a sultan !
Say, 'Thy governor has broken my servant's head;
He has cast burning coals on his own life.
Arrest tnis wicked governor,
Or else, I will bestow thy kingdom on
another.' " 520
The letter of the saint who had access to God
Caused the monarch to tremble in every limb.
His Body was filled with aches,
He grew as pale as the evening sun.
He sought out a handcuff for the governor 525
And entreated Bu Ao to pardon this offence.
Khusrau, the sweet-voiced eloquent poet,[1]
Whose harmonies flow from the
creative mind
And whose genius hath the soft brilliance of
moonlight,
Was chosen to be the king's ambassador 530
When he entered Bu Ali's presence and
played his lute,
His song melted the fakir's soul like glass.
One strain of poesy bought the grace
Of a kingdom that was firm as a mountain

1. Amir Khusrau of Delhi, the most celebrated of the Persian poets of India.

Do not wound the hearts of dervishes, 535
Do not throw thyself into burning fire !

VI

A tale of which the moral is that negation of the Self is a doctrine invented by the subject races of mankind in order that by this means they may sap and weaken the character of their rulers.

HAST thou heard that in the time of old
The sheep dwelling in a certain pasture
So increased and multiplied
That they feared no enemy? 540
At last, from the malice of Fate,
Their breasts were smitten by a shaft
of calamity.
The tigers sprang forth from the jungle
And rushed upon the sheepfold.
Conquest and dominion are signs of
strength, 545
Victory is the manifestation of strength.
Those fierce tigers beat the drum of
sovereignty,
They deprived the sheep of freedom.
Forasmuch as tigers must have their prey,
That meadow was crimsoned with the
blood of the sheep. 550
One of the sheep which was clever and acute,
Old in years, cunning as a weather-beaten wolf,

Being grieved at the fate of his fellows
And sorely vexed by the violence of the tigers,
Made complaint of the course of Destiny 555
And sought by craft to restore the
fortunes of his race.
The weak, in order to preserve themselves,
Seek devices from skilled intelligence.
In slavery, for the sake of repelling harm,
The power of scheming becomes quickened 560
And when the madness of revenge gains hold,
The mind of the slave meditates rebellion.
"Ours is a hard knot," said this sheep, to himself,
"The ocean of our griefs hath no shore.
By force we sheep cannot escape from the
tiger : 565
Our legs are silver, his paws are steel.
'Tis not possible, however much one exhorts
and counsels,
To create in a sheep the disposition of a wolf.
But to make the furious tiger a sheep—that is
possible.
To make him unmindful of his nature
—that is possible" 570
He became as a prophet inspired,
And began to preach to the blood-thirsty tigers.
He cried out "O ye insolent liars,
Who wot not of a day of ill-luck that
shall continue for ever."[1]

1. These expressions are borrowed from the Koran

I am possessed of spiritual power, 575
I am an apostle sent by God for the tigers.
I come as a light for the eye that is dark.
I come to establish laws and give
commandments.
Repent of your blameworthy deeds
O plotters of evil, bethink yourselves of
good 580
Whoso is violent and strong is miserable:
Life's solidity depends on self-denial.
The spirit of the righteous is fed by fodder:
The vegetarian is pleasing unto God.
The sharpness of your teeth brings
disgrace upon you, 585
And makes the eye of your perception blind.
Paradise is for the weak alone,
Strength is but a means to perdition.
It is wicked to seek greatness and glory,
Penury is sweeter than princedom.
Lightning does not threaten the cornseed;
If the seed become a stack, it is unwise.
If you are sensible, you will be a mote of sand,
not a Sahara,
So that you may enjoy the sunbeams.
O thou that delightest in the slaughter of
sheep, 595
Slay thy self, and thou wilt have honour.
Life is rendered unstable
By violence, oppression, revenge, and
exercise of power.

Though trodden underfoot the grass grows up
time after time
And washes the sleep of death from its eye
again and again 600
Forget thy self, if thou art wise
If thou does not forget thy self, thou
art mad.
Close thine eyes, close thine ears, close
thy lips[1]
That they thought may reach the lofty sky.
This pasturage of the world is naught,
naught: 605
O fool, do not torment thyself for a phantom"
The tiger-tribe was exhausted by hard
struggles,
They had set their hearts on enjoyment of
luxury.
This soporific advice pleased them,
In their stupidity they swallowed the charm of
the sheep, 610
He that used to make sheep his prey
Now embraced a sheep's religion.
The tigers took kindly to a diet of fodder:
At length their tigerish nature was broken.
The fodder blunted their teeth 615
And put out the awful fleshings of their eyes.
By degrees courage ebbed from their breasts,
The sheen departed from the mirror.

1. Quoted from the *Masnavi*.

That frenzy of uttermost exertion remained not,
That craving after action dwelt in their hearts
no more. 620
They lost the power of ruling and the resolution
to be independent,
They lost reputation, prestige, and fortune.
Their paws that were as iron became
strengthless;
Their souls died and their bodies became
tombs.
Bodily strength diminished while spiritual fear
increased: 625
Spiritual fear robbed them of courage.
Lack of courage produced a hundred
diseases—
Poverty, pusillanimity, low-mindedness.
The wakeful tiger was lulled to slumber by the
sheep's charm:
He called his decline Moral Culture. 630

VII

To the effect that Plato, whose thought has deeply influenced the mysticism and literature of Islam, followed the sheep's doctrine, and that we must be on our guard against his theories.[1]

1. The direct influence of Platonism on Moslem thought has been comparatively slight When the Moslems began to study Greek philosophy, they turned to Aristotle. The genuine writings of Aristotle, however, were not acces-

PLATO the prime ascetic and sage,
Was one of that ancient flock of sheep.
His Pegasus went astray in the darkness of idealism
And dropped its shoe amidst the rocks of actuality.
He was so fascinated by the invisible. 635
That he made hand, eyes, and ear of no account.
"To die," said he, "is the secret of Life.
The candle is glorified by being put out"
He dominates our thinking,
His cup sends us to sleep and takes the sensible world away from us. 640
He is a sheep in man's clothing,
The soul of the Sufi bows to his authority.
He soared with his intellect to the highest heaven
And called the world of phenomena a myth.
'Twas his work to dissolve the structure of Life. 645
And cut the bough of Life's fair tree asunder.

---

sible to them. They studied translations of books passing under his name, which were the work of Neoplatonists, so that what they believed to be Aristotelian doctrine was in fact the philosophy of Plotinus, Proclus, and the later Neoplatonic school. Indirectly, therefore, Plato has profoundly influenced the intellectual and spiritual development of Islam and may be called, if not the father of Mohammedan mysticism, at any rate its presiding genius.

The thought of Plato regarded loss as profit,
His philosophy declared that being is not-being.
His natures drowsed and created a dream,
His mind's eye created a mirage. 650
Since he was without any taste for action,
His soul was enraptured by the non-existent.
He disbelieved in the material universe
And became the creator of invisible ideas.
Sweet is the world of phenomena to the living
spirit, 655
Dear is the world of ideas to the dead spirit;
Its gazelles have no grace of movement,
Its patridges denied the pleasure of walking
daintily.
Its dewdrops are unable to quiver,
Its birds have no breath in their breasts, 660
Its seed does not desire to grow,
Its moths do not know how to flutter.
Our recluse had no remedy but flight:
He could not endure the noise of this world.
He set his heart on the flow of a quenched
female 665
And depicted a world steeped in opium.
He spread his wings towards the sky
And never came down to this nest again.
His phantasy is sunk in the jar of heaven:
I know not whether it is the dregs or the brick of
the wine jar.[1] 670

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1. I.e. it is worthless anyhow. In the East a brick is placed

The peoples were poisoned by his intoxication:
He slumbered and took no delight in deeds.

VIII

Concerning the true nature of Poetry and reform of Islamic Literature.

'TIS the brand of desire makes the
blood of man run warm.
By the lamp of desire this dust is enkindled.
By desire Life's cup is brimmed with wine,
So that Life leaps to its feet and marches
briskly on.
Life is occupied with conquest alone,
And the one charm of conquest is desire.
Life is the hunter and desire the snare,
Desire is Love's message of Beauty, 680
Wherefore doth desire swell continuously,
The bass and treble of Life's song?
Whatsoever is good and fair and beautiful,
Is our guide in the wilderness of seeking.
Its image becomes impressed on thine heart, 685
It creates desires in thine heart.
Beauty is the creator of desire's springtide,
Desire is nourished by the display of Beauty.
'Tis in the poet's breast that Beauty unveils,

beneath or over the wine jar. Some Moslem writers confuse Plato with Diogenes the Cynic, who is said to have lived in a cask.

'Tis from his Sinai that Beauty's beams arise 690
By his look the fair is made fairer,
Through his enchantments Nature is more
beloved;
From his lips the nightingale hath
learned her song,
And his rouge hath brightened the
cheek of the rose.
'Tis his passion burns in the heart of
the moth, 695
'Tis he that lends glowing hues to love tales.
Sea and land are hidden within his
water and clay,[1]
A hundred new worlds are concealed
in his heart.
Ere tulips blossomed in his brain
There was heard no note of joy or grief. 700
His music breathes o'er us a wonderful
enchantment,
His pen draws a mountain with a single hair.
His thoughts dwell with the moon and the stars.
He creates beauty and knows not what is ugly.
He is a Khizr, and amidst his darkness
is the Fountain of Life.[2] 705
All things, that exist are made more

---

1. I.e. in his body.
2. Khizr, according to the legend, discovered the Fountain of Life in the Land of Darkness.

living by his tears.
Heavily we go, like raw novices,
Stumbling on the way of the goal.
His nightingale hath played a tune
And laid a plot to beguile us 710
That he may lead us into Life's Paradise,
And that Life's bow may become a full circle.
Caravans march at the sound of his bell
And follow the voice of his pipe;
When his zephyr blows in our garden, 715
It slowly steals into the tulips and roses.
His witchery makes Life develop itself
And become self-questioning and impatient.
He invites the whole world to his table;
He lavishes his fire as though it were
cheap as air. 720
Woe to a people that resigns itself to death,
And whose poet turns away from the
joy of living !
His mirror shows beauty as ugliness,
His honey leaves a hundred stings in
the heart.
His kiss robs the rose of freshness, 725
He takes away from the nightingale's
heart the joy of flying.
Thy sinews are relaced by his opium,
Thou payest for his song with thy life.
He bereaves the cypress of delight in
its beauty.
His cold breath makes a pheasant of the male

falcon.
He is a fish, and from the breast upward a man,
Like the Sirens in the ocean.
With his song he enchants the pilot
And casts the ship to the bottom of
the sea.
His melodies steal firmness from thine
heart, 735
His magic persuades thee that death is life,
He takes from thy soul the desire of existence,
He extracts from thy mine the blushing ruby.
He dresses gain in the garb of loss,
He makes everything praiseworthy
blameful. 740
He plunges thee in a sea of thought
And makes thee a stranger to action.
He is sick, and by his words our sickness is
increased:
The more his cup goes round, the more
sick are they that quaff it.
There are no lightning-rains in his April, 745
His garden is a mirage of colour and perfume.
His beauty hath no dealings with Truth.
There are none but flawed pearls in his sea.
Slumber he deemed sweeter than waking:
Our fire was quenched by his breath. 750
By the chant of his nightingale the heart was
poisoned;
Under his heap of roses lurked a snake.
Beware of his decanter and cup

Beware of his sparkling wine,
O thou whom his wine hath laid low 755
And who look'st to his glass for thy
rising dawn,
O thou whose heart hath been chilled
by his melodies,
Thou hast drunk deadly posion through the ear
Thy way of life is a proof of thy degeneracy,
The strings of thine instrument are out of
tune. 760
'Tis pampered ease hath made thee so
wretched,
A disgrace to Islam throughout the world.
One can bind thee with the vein of a rose,
One can wound thee with a zephyr.
Love hath been put to shame by thy wailing,
His fair picture hath been fouled by thy brush.
Thy illness hath paled his cheek,
Thy coldness hath taken the glow from his fire.
He is heartsick from thy heartsicknesses,
And enfeebled by thy feeblenesses, 770
His cup is full of childish tears,
His house is furnished with distressful sighs.[1]
He is a drunkard begging at tavern-doors,
Stealing glimpses of beauty from lattices,
Unhappy, melancholy, injured, 775
Kicked well-nigh to death by the warder;

---

1. In this passage the author assails the Persian and Urdu poetry so much in favour with his contemporaries

Wasted like a reed by sorrows,
On his lips a store of complaints against
Heaven.
Flattery and spite are the mettle of his mirror,
Helplessness his comrade of old; 780
A miserable base-born underling
Without worth of hope or object,
Whose lamentations have sucked the marrow
from thy soul
And driven off gentle sleep from thy neighbours'
eyes.
Alas for a love whose fire is extinct, 785
A love that was born in the Holy
Place and died in the house of idols
Oh, if thou hast the coin of poesy in thy purse,
Rub it on the touchstone of Life
Clear-seeing thought shows the way to action,
As the lightning-flash precedes the thunder. 790
It behoves thee to meditate well concerning
literature,
It behoves thee to go back to Arabia:
Thou must needs give thine heart to the Salma
of Araby,[1]
That the morn of the Hijaz may blossom from

---

1. Arabic odes usually begin with a prelude in which the poet makes mention of his beloved; and her name is often Salma. Here the "Salma of Araby" refers to purely Moslem ideals in literature and religion.

the night of Kurdistan.[1]
Thou hast gathered roses from the garden of
Persia 795
And seen the springtide of India and Iran:
Now taste a little of the heat of the desert,
Drink the old wine of the date
Lay thine head for once on its hot breast,
Yield thy body awhile to its scorching wind. 800
For a long time thou hast turned about on a
bed of silk;
Now accustom thyself to rough cotton.
For generations thou hast danced on tulips
And bathed thy cheek in dew, like the rose;
Now throw thyself on the burning sand 805
And plunge into the fountain of Zemzem

---

1. It is related that an ignorant Kurd came to some students and be sought them to instruct him in the mysteries of Sufism. They told him that he must fasten a rope to the roof of his house, then tie the loose end to his feet and suspend himself, head downwards; and that he must remain in this posture as long as possible, reciting continually some words of gibberish which they taught him The poor man did not perceive that he was being mocked. He followed their instructions and passed the whole night repeating the words given him. God rewarded his faith and sincerity by granting him illumination, so that he became a saint and could discourse learnedly on the most abstruse matters of mystical theology. Afterwards he used to say, "In the evening I was a Kurd, but the next morning I was an Arab."

How long wilt thou fain lament like the
nightingale?
How long make thine abode in gardens?
O thou whose auspicious snare would do
honour to the Phoenix,
Build a nest on the high mountains 810
A nest embosomed in lightning and thunder,
Loftier than eagle's eyrie,
That thou mayst be fit for Life's battle,
That thy body and soul may burn in Life's fire.

IX

Showing that the education of the Self has three stages: Obedience, Self-control and Divine Vicegerency.

I. Obedience

SERVICE and toil are traits of the camel, 815
Patience and perserverance are ways of the
camel.
Noiselessly he steps along the sandy track,
He is the ship of those who voyage in the desert.
Every thicket knows the print of his foot:
He eats seldom, sleeps little, and is inured to
toil. 820
He carries rider, baggage, and litter;
He trots on and on to the journey's end,
Rejoicing in his speed,

More patient in travel than his rider.
Thou, too, do not refuse the burden of Duty:
So wilt thou enjoy the best dwelling-place, which
is with God.
Endeavour to obey, O heedless one
Liberty is the fruit of compulsion.
By obedience the man of no worth is made
worthy;
By disobedience his fire is turned to ashes. 830
Whoso would master the sun and stars.
Let him make himself a prisoner of Law
The air becomes fragrant when it is imprisoned
in the flower-bud;
The perfume becomes musk when it is confined
in the navel ot the musk-deer.
The star moves towards its goal 835
With head bowed in surrender to a law.
The grass springs up in obedience to the law of
growth;
When it abandons that, it is trodden underfoot.
To burn unceasingly is the law of the tulip
And so the blood leaps in its veins. 840
Drops of water become a sea by the law of union,
And grains of sand become a Sahara.
Since law makes everything strong within,
Why dost thou neglect this source of strength?
O thou that art emancipated from the old
Custom,[1]

1. The religious law of Islam.

Adorn thy feet once more with the same fine
silver chain
Do not complain of the hardness of the Law,
Do not transgress the statutes of Mohammed.

2. Self Control

THY soul cares only for itself, like the camel;
It is self-conceited, self-governed, and self
willed. 850
Be a man, get its halter into thine hand,
That thou mayst become a pearl albeit thou art a
potter's vessel.
He that does not command himself
Becomes a receiver of commands from others.
When they moulded thee of clay,
Love and fear were mingled in thy making:
Fear of this world and of the world to come, fear
of death,
Fear of all the pains of earth and heaven;
Love of riches and power, love of country,
Love of self and kindred and wife. 860
Man, in whom clay is mixed with water, is fond of
ease,
Devoted to wickedness and enamoured of evil.
So long as thou hold'st the staff of
"There is no god but He,"[1]
Thou wilt break every spell of fear.

1. The first article of the Mohammedan creed.

One to whom God is as the soul in his body. 865
His neck is not bowed before vanity.
Fear finds no way into his bosom,
His heart is afraid of none but Allah.
Who dwells in the world of Negation.[1]
Is free from the bonds of wife and child. 870
He withdraws his gaze from all except God
And lays the knife to the throat of his son.[2]
Though single, he is like a host in onset:
Life is cheaper in his eyes than wind.
The profession of Faith is the shell, and prayer is
the pearl within it: 875
The Moslem's heart deems prayer a lesser
pilgrimage.[3]
In the Moslem's hand prayer is like a dagger.
Killing sin and forwardness and wrong.
Fasting makes an assault upon hunger and thirst
And breaches the citadel of sensuality 880
The pilgrimage enlightens the soul of the Faithful:
It teaches separation from one's home and
destroys attachment of one's native land;
It is an act of devotion in which all feel
themselves to be one.
It binds together the leaves of the book of

1 I.e. denies every object of worship except Allah.
2. Like Abraham when he was about to sacrifice Isaac or (as Moslems generally believe) Ishmael.
3. The lesser pilgrimage (*uram*) is not obligatory like the greater pilgrimage (*hajj*).

religion.
Almsgiving causes love of riches to pass away,
And makes equality familiar;
It fortifies the heart with righteousness,[1]
It increases wealth and diminishes fondness for
wealth.
All this is a means of strengthening thee:
Thou art impregnable, if thy Islam be strong. 890
Draw might from the litany "O Almighty One"
That thou mayst ride the camel of thy body.

3. Divine Vicegerency[3].

IF thou canst rule thy camel, thou wilt rule the
world
And wear on thine head the crown of
Solomon.
Thou wilt be the glory of the world whilst the
world lasts 895

---

1. The original quotes part of a verse in the Koran (ch 3 v. 36) where it is said, "Ye shall never attain unto righteousness until ye give in alms of that which ye love".
2. I.e. overcome the lusts of the flesh.
3. Here Iqbal interprets in his own way the Sufi doctrine of of the *Insan al-kamil* or Perfect Man which teaches, that every man is potentially a microcosm, and that when he has become spiritually perfect, all the Divine attributes are displayed by him, so that as saint or prophet he is the God man, the representative and vicegerent of God on earth.

And thou wilt reign in the kingdom incorruptible.
('Tis sweet to be God's vicegerent in the world.
And exercise sway over the elements.
God's vicegerent is as the soul of the universe,
His being is the shadow of the Greatest
Name. 900
He knows the mysteries of part and whole.
He executes the command of Allah in the world.
When he pitches his tent in the wide world.
He rolls up this ancient carpet.[1]
His genius abounds with life and desires to
manifest itself; 905
He will bring another world into existence.
A hundred worlds like this world of parts and
wholes
Spring up, like roses, from the seeds of his
imagination.
He makes every raw nature ripe,
He puts the idols out of the sanctuary
Heart-strings give forth music at his touch, 910
He wakes and sleeps for God alone.
He teaches age the melody of youth
And endows everything with the radiance of
youth.
To the human race he brings both a glad
message and a warning, 915
He comes both as a soldier and as a
marshal and prince.

---

1. i.e. his appearance marks the end of an epoch.

He is the final cause of "God taught
Adam the names of all things."[1]
He is the inmost sense of "Glory to
Him that transported His servant by night."[2]
His white hand is strengthened by the staff,[3]
His knowledge is twinned with the power
of perfect man. 920
When that bold cavalier seizes the reins,
The steed of Time gallops faster.
His awful mien makes the Red Sea dry,
He leads Israel out of Egypt,
At his cry, "Arise," the dead spirits 925
Rise in their bodily tomb, like pines in the field.
His person is an atonement for all the worlds,
By his grandeur the world is saved.
His protecting shadow makes the mote
familiar with the sun.
His rich substance makes precious all
that exists, 930
He bestows life by his miraculous action,
He renovates old ways of life.
Splendid visions rise from the print of his foot,
Many a Moses is entranced by his Sinai.

---

1. Koran, ch. 2, v. 29. The Ideal Man is the final cause of creation.
2. Koran ch. 17. v, 1, referring to the Ascension of the Prophet.
3. For the white hand (of Moses) cf. Koran, ch. 7, v. 105 ch. 28, v. 32, and Exodus, ch. 4, v. 6.

He gives a new explanation of Life, 935
A new interpretation of this dream.
His hidden being the Life's mystery
The unheard music of Life's harp.
Nature travails in blood for generations
To compose the harmony of his
personality.[1] 940
Our handful of earth has reached the zenith,
For that champion will come forth from this
dust !
There sleeps amidst the ashes of our To-day.
The flame of a world consuming morrow.
Our bud enfolds a garden of roses 945
Our eyes are bright with to-morrow's dawn.
Appear, O rider of Destiny !
Appear, O light of the dark realm of Change'
Illumine the scene of existence,
Dwell in the blackness of our eyes ! 950
Silence the noise of the nations,
Imparadise our ears with their music !
Arise and tune the harp of brother-hood,
Give us back the cup of the wine of love !
Bring once more days of peace to the world, 955
Give a message of peace to them that seek
battle !
Mankind are the cornfield and thou the harvest,
Thou art the goal of Life's Caravan.

---

1. These four lines may allude to Jesus, regarded as a type of the Perfect Man.

The leaves are scattered by Autumn's fury:
Oh, do thou pass over our gardens at the
Spring ! 960
Receive from our downcast brows
The homage of little children and of
young men and old !
It is to thee that we owe our dignity
And silently undergo the pains of life.

X

Setting forth the inner meaning of the names
of Ali.

ALI is the first Moslem and the King
of men, 965
In Love's eyes Ali is the treasurer the Faith.
Devotion to his family inspires me with life.
So that I am as a shining pearl !
Like the narcissus, I am enraptured with gazing;
Like perfume, I am straying through his
pleasure-garden 970
If holy water gushes from my earth,
he is the source;
If wine pours from my grapes, he is the cause.
I am dust, but his sun hath made me as a mirror:
Song can be seen in my breast.
From Ali's face the Prophet drew
many a fair omen 975
By his majesty the true religion is glorified.

His commandments are the strength of Islam.
All things pay allegiance to his House.
The Apostle or God gave him the
name Bu Turab;
God in the Koran called him the
"Hand of Allah" 980
Every one that is acquainted with
Life's mysteries.
Knows what is the inner meaning
of the names of Ali.
The dark clay, whose name is the body—
Our reason is ever bemoaning its iniquity.
On account of it our sky-reaching
thought plods o'er the earth;
It makes our eyes blind and our ears deaf.
It hath in its hand a two-edged sword of lust:
Travellers' hearts are broken by this brigand.
Ali, the Lion of God, subdued the body's clay
And transmuted this dark earth to gold. 990
Murtaza, by whose sword the
splendour of Truth was revealed,
Is named Bu Turab from his conquest of the
body.[1]
Man wins territory by prowess in battle,
But his brightest jewel is mastery of himself.
Whosoever in the world becomes a Bu
Turab,

1. Murtaza "he whom with God is pleased," is a name of Ali. Bu Turab means literally "father of earth."

Turns back the sun from the west.[1]
Whosoever saddles tightly the steed of the body
Sits like the bezel on the seal of sovereignty:
Here the might of Khaibar is under his feet,[2]
And hereafter his hand will distribute the water
of Kauthar.[3] 1000
And in virtue of being God's Hand he reigns
over all.
His person is the gate of the city of the sciences:[4]
Arabia, China, and Greece are subject to him.
If thou wouldst drink clear wine from thine own
grapes, 1005
Thou must needs wield authority over thine own
earth.
To become earth is the creed of a moth;
Be a conqueror of earth; that alone is worthy of
a man.
Thou art soft as a rose. Become hard as a stone,
That thou mayst be the foundation of the wall of
the garden 1010
Build thy clay into a Man,
Build thy man into a World!

---

1. A miracle attributed to Ali.
2. The fortress of Khaibar, a village in the Hijaz, was captured by the Moslems A.D. 628 Ali performed great feats of valour on this occasion.
3. A river Paradise.
4. According to the Tradition of the Prophet, "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate."

Unless from thine own earth thou build thine
own wall or door.
Some one else will make bricks of thine earth.
O thou who complainest of the cruelty of
Heaven. 1015
Thou whose glass cries out against the injustice
of the stone.
How long this wailing and crying and
lamentation?
How long this perpetual beating of thy breast?
The pith of Life is contained in action,
To delight in creation is the law of Life 1020
Arise and create a new world !
Wrap thyself in flames, be an Abraham.[1]
To comply with this world which does not favour
thy purposes
Is to fling away thy buckler on the field of battle.
The man of strong character who is master of
himself. 1025
Will find Fortune complaisant.
If the world does not comply with his humour,
He will try the hazard of war with Heaven;
He will dig up the foundations of the universe
And cast its atoms into a new mould. 1030
He will subvert the course of Time
And wreck the azure firmament.
By his own strength he will produce
A new world which will do his pleasure.

---

1. See note on 1. 213

If one cannot live in the world as beseems a
man,
Then it is better to die like the brave.
He that hath a sound heart
Will prove his strength by great enterprises.
'Tis sweet to use love in hard tasks
And, like Abraham, to gather roses from
flames.[1] 1040
The potentialities of men of action
Are displayed in willing acceptance of what is
difficult.
Mean spirits have no weapon but resentment,
Life has only one law
Life is power made manifest 1045
And its mainspring is the desire for victory.
Mercy out of season is a chilling of Life's blood.
A break in the rhythm of Life's music.
Whoever is sunk in the depths of ignominy.
Calls his weakness contentment.
Weakness is the plunderer of Life,
Its womb is teeming with fears and lies,
Its soul is empty of virtues,
Vices fatten on its milk.
O man of sound judgement, beware ! 1055
This spider is lurking in ambush.
Be not its dupe, if thou art wise:
Chameleon-like, it changes colour every

---

1. The burning pyre on which Abraham was thrown lost its heat and was transformed into a rose-garden.

moment.
Even by keen observers its form is not discerned.
Veils are thrown over its face. 1060
Now It is muffled in pity and gentleness,
Now it wears the cloak of humanity.
Sometimes it is disguised as compulsion,
Sometimes as excusability.
It appears in the shape of self-indulgence 1065
And robs the strong man's heart of courage.
Strength is the twin of Truth;
If thou knowst thyself, strength is the Truth-revealing glass.
Life is the seed, and power the crop:
Power explains the mystery of truth and falsehood 1070
A claimant, if he be possessed of power,
Needs no arguments for his claim.
Falsehood derives from power the authority of truth.
And by falsifying truth deems itself true.
Its creative word transforms poison into nectar; 1075
It says to Good, "Thou art bad," and Good becomes Evil.
O thou that art heedless of the trust committed to thee,
Esteem thyself superior to both worlds. .[1]

1. The "trust" which God offered to Man and which Man

Gain knowledge of Life's mysteries !
Be a tyrant ! Ignore all except God ! 1080
O man of understanding, open thine eyes,
ears, and lips ![1]
If then thou seest not the Way of Truth,
laugh at me !

XI

Story of a young man of Merv who came to the saint Ali-Hujwiri-God have mercy on him— and complained that he was oppressed by his enemies.

THE Saint of Hujwiri was venerated by the
peoples,
And Pir-i-Sanjar visited his tomb as a
pilgrim .[2]
With ease he broke down the mountain-barriers
And sowed the seed of Islam in India
The age of Omar was restored by his godliness,
The fame of the Truth was exalted by his

---

accepted, after it had been refused by Heaven and Earth (Koran ch 33 v 72) is the divine vicegerency i e the duty of displaying the divine attributes.

1. A parody of the verse in the *Masnavi* quoted above See. 1 603.
2. Hujwiri, author of the oldest Persian treatise on Sufism, was a native of Ghazna in Afghanistan. He dies at Lahore about A D. 1072. Pir-i Sanjar is the renowned saint, Mu'inudddin, head of the Chishti order of dervishes, who died in A.D. 1235 at Ajmir.

words.
He was a guardian of the honour of the Koran.
The house of Falsehood fell in ruins at his
gaze. 1090
The dust of the Punjab was brought to life by
his breath.
Our dawn was made splendid by his sun.
He was a lover, and withal a courier of Love.
The secrets of Love shone forth from his brow.
I will tell a story of his perfection
And enclose a whole rose-bed in a single bud.
A young man, cypress-tall.
Came from the town of Merv to Lahore.
He went to see the venerable saint,
That the sun might dispel his darkness. 1100
"I am hemmed in," he said, "by foes;
I am as a glass in the midst of stones.
Do thou teach me, O sire of heavenly rank,
How to lead my life amongst enemies"
The wise Directors, in whose nature 1105
Love had allied beauty with majesty,
Answered : Thou art unread in Life's lore,
Careless of its end and its beginning.
Be without fear of others !
Thou art a sleeping force: awake ! 1110
When the stone thought itself to be glass,
It became glass and got into the way of
breaking.
If the traveller thinks himself weak,
He delivers his soul unto the brigand.

How long wilt thou regard thyself as water and
clay? 1115
Create from thy clay a flaming Sinai!
Why be angry with mighty men?
Why complain of enemies
I will declare the truth: thine enemy is thy friend;
His existence crowns thee with glory. 1120
Whoseover knows the states of the Self
Considers a powerful enemy to be a blessing
from God.
To the seed of Man the enemy is a rain-cloud;
He awakens its potentialities.
If thy spirit be strong, the stones in thy way are
as water: 1125
What wrecks the torrent of the ups and downs of
the roads?
The sword of resolution is whetted by the stones
in the way
And put to proof by traversing stage after stage.
What is the use of eating and sleeping like a
beast?
What is the use of being, unless thou have
strength in thyself? 1130
When thou mak'st thyself strong with Self,
Thou wilt destroy the world at thy pleasure.
If thou wouldst pass a way, become free of Self;
If thou wouldst live, become free of Self.[1]

1. These lines correct the Sufi doctrine that by means of passing away, from individuality the mystic attains to everlasting life in God.

What is death? To become oblivious to Self. 1135
Why imagine that it is the parting of soul and
body?
Abide in Self, like Joseph[1]
Advance from captivity to empire!
Think of Self and be a man of action.
Be a man of God, bear mysteries within! 1140
I will explain the matter by means of stories,
I will open the bud by the power of my breath.
'Tis better that a lover's secret
Should be told by the lips of others...[1]

XII

Story of the bird that was faint with thirst.

A BIRD was faint with thirst, 1145
The breath on his body was heaving like waves
of smoke.
He was a diamond in the garden:
Thirst created a vision of water.
Deceived by the sunbright stone
The foolish bird fancied that it was water 1150
He got no moisture from the gem;
He pecked it with his beak, but it did not wet his
palate.
"O thrall of vain desire," said the diamond,
"Thou hast sharpened thy greedy beak on me;
But I am not a dewdrop, I give no drink 1155

---

1. I.e. allegorically This verse occurs in the *Masnavi*.

I do not live for the sake of others.
Wouldst thou hurt me? Thou art mad !
A lie that reveals the Self is strange to thee
My water will shiver the beaks of birds
And break the jewel of man's life.[1] 1160
The bird won not his heart's wish from the diamond
And turned away from the sparkling stone.
Disappointment swelled in his breast,
The song in his throat became a wail.
Upon a rose twig a drop of dew 1165
Gleamed like the tear in a nightingale's eye:
All its glitter was owing to the sun,
It was trembling in fear of the sun—
A restless sky-born star
That had stopped for a moment, from desire to be seen; 1170
Oft deceived by bud and flower,
It had gained nothing from Life.
There it hung, ready to drop,
Like a tear on the eyelashes of a lover who hath lost his heart.
The sorely distressed bird hopped under the rose bush 1175
The dewdrop trickled into his mouth.
O thou that wouldst deliver thy soul from enemies,
I ask thee—"Art thou a drop of water or a

1. I.e. if he swallow a diamond, he will die.

gem?"
When the bird melted in the fire of thirst,
It appropriated the life of another. 1180
The drop was not solid and gem-like;
The diamond had a being, the drop had none.
Never for an instant neglect self-preservation:
Be a diamond, not a dewdrop !
Be massive in nature, like mountains 1185
And bear on thy crest a hundred clouds laden
with floods of rain !
Save thyself by affirmation of Self,
Compress thy quicksilver into silver ore !
Produce a melody from the string of Self.
Make manifest the secrets of Self ! 1190

XIII

Story of the diamond and the coal.

NOW I will open one more gate of Truth,
I will tell thee another tale.
The coal in the mine said to the diamond,
"O thou entrusted with splendours everlasting,
We are comrades, and our being is one; 1195
The source of our existence is the same,
Yet while I die here in the anguish of
worthlessness,
Thou art set on the crowns of emperors.
My stuffs so vile that I am valued less than
earth,
Whereas the mirror's heart is rent by thy

beauty. 1200
My darkness illumines the chafing-dish,
Then my substance is incinerated at last.
Every one puts the sole of his foot on my head
And covers my stock of existence with ashes.
My fate must needs be deplored; 1205
Dost thou know what is the gist of my being?
It is a condensed wavelet of smoke
Endowed with a single spark—[1]
Both in feature and nature thou art starlike,
Splendours rise from every side of thee 1210
Now thou becom'st the light of a monarch's eye,
Now thou adornest the shaft of a dagger.
"O sagacious friend" said the diamond,
"Dark earth, when hardened, becomes in
dignity as a bezel.
Having been at strife with its environment, 1215
It is ripened by the struggle and grows
hard like a stone,
'Tis this ripeness that has endowed
my form with light.
And filled my bosom with radiance.
Because thy being is immature, thou
hast become abased;
Because thy body is soft, thou art burnt. 1220
Be void of fear, grief, and anxiety,
Be hard as a stone, be a diamond !
Whosoever strives, hard and grips tight,

1. These two lines indicate the gist of the coal's being.

The two words are illumined by him.
A little earth is the origin of the Black
stone, 1225
Which puts forth its head in the Ka'ba:
Its rank is higher than Sinai,
It is kissed by the swarthy and the fair.
In solidity consists the glory of Life;
Weakness is worthlessness and
immaturity." 1230

XIV

Story of the Sheikh and the Brahmin, followed by a conversation between Ganges and Himalaya to the effect that the continuation of social life depends on firm attachments to the characteristic traditions of the community.

AT Benares lived a venerable Brahmin,
Whose head was deep in the ocean of
Being and Not-being,
He had a large knowledge of philosophy.
But was well-disposed to the seekers after God.
His mind was eager to explore new
problems 1235
His intellect moved on a level with the
Pleiades;
His nest was as high as that of the Anka...[1]
Sun and moon were cast, like rue, on the

1. A mysterious bird, of which nothing is known except its name.

flame of his thought...[1]
For a long time he laboured and sweated,
But philosophy brought no wine to his
cup. 1240
Although he set many a snare in the
gardens of learning,
His snares never caught a glimpse of
the ideal bird ;
And notwithstanding that the nails of his
thought were dabbled with blood,
The knot of Being and Not-being remained
united.
The sighs on his lips bore witness to his
despair, 1245
His countenance told tales of his distraction.
One day he visited an excellent Sheikh,
A man who had in his breast a heart of gold.
The Brahmin laid the seal of silence on
his lips.
And lent his ear to the Sage's discourse 1250
Then said the Sheikh: "O wanderer in the
lofty sky,
Pledge thyself to be true, for a little,
to the earth !
Thou hast lost thy way in wildernesses of
speculation.
Thy fearless thought hath passed beyond
Heaven.

---

1. Rue-seed is burned for the purpose of fumigation.

Be reconciled with earth, O sky-traveller ! 1255
Do not wander in quest of the essence of
the stars !
I do not bid thee abandon thine idols
Art thou an unbeliever? Then be worthy of the
badge of unbelief.[1]
O inheritor of ancient culture,
Turn not thy back on the path thy fathers
trod ! 1260
If a people's life is derived from unity,
Unbelief too is source of unity.
Thou that art not even a perfect infidel
Art unfit to worship at the shrine of the spirit.
We both are far astray from the road of
devotion: 1265
Thou art far from Azfar, and I from Abraham...[2]
Our Majnum hath not fallen into melancholy for
his Laila's sake:
He hath not become perfect in the madness of love
When the lamp of Self expires,
What is the use of heaven surveying
imagination? 1270
Once on a time, laying hold of the skirt of the
mountain,
Ganges said to Himalaya:

1. "The badge of unbelief" : here the original has *zunnar* i.e. the sacred thread worn by Zoroastrians and other non-Moslems.
2. Azfar, the father of Abraham, was an idolater.

"O thou mantled in snow since the morn of creation,
Thou whose form is girdled with streams,
God made thee a partner in the secrets of heaven, 1275
But deprived thy foot of graceful gait—
He took away from thee the power to walk.
What avails this sublimity and stateliness?
Life springs from perpetual movement;
Motion constitutes the wave's whole existence." 1280
When the mountain heard this taunt from the river,
He puffed angrily like a sea of fire,
And answered, "Thy wide waters are my looking glass;
Within my bosom are a hundred rivers like thee.
This graceful gait of thine is an instrument of death: 1285
Whoso goeth from Self is meet to die.
Thou hast no knowledge of thine own case,
Thou exultest in thy misfortune: thou art a fool!
O born of the womb of the revolving sky,
A fallen-in bank is better than thou! 1290
Thou hast made thine existence an offering to the ocean,
Thou hast thrown the rich purse of thy life to the highwayman.
Be self-contained like the rose in the garden,

Do not go to the florist in order to spread thy
perfume !
To live is to grow in thyself 1295
And gather roses from thine own flower-bed.
Ages have gone by and my foot is fast in earth !
Dost thou fancy that I am far from my goal?
My being grew and reached the sky,
The Pleiades sank to rest under my skirts; 1300
The being vanishes in the ocean
But on my crest the stars bow their heads.
Mine eye sees the mysteries of heaven,
Mine ear is familiar with angels' wings.
Since I glowed with the heat of unceasing
toil, 1305
I amassed rubies, diamonds, and other gems.
I am stone within, and in the stone is fire:
Water cannot pass over my fire !
Art thou a drop of water? Do not
break at thine own feet,
But endeavour to surge and wrestle
with the sea. 1310
Desire the water of a jewel, become a jewel !
Be an ear drop, adorn a beauty !
Oh, expand thyself' Move swiftly !
Be a cloud that shoots lightning and
sheds a flood of rain !
Let the ocean sue for thy storms as
a beggar 1315
Let it complain of the straitness of its skirts !
Let it deem itself less than a wave

And glide along thy feet !

XV

Showing that the purpose of the Moslem's life is to exalt the Word of Allah, and that the *Jihad* (war against unbelievers) if it be promoted by land-hunger, is unlawful in the religion of Islam.

IMBUE thine heart wilh the tincture of Allah.
Give honour and glory to Love ! 1320
The Moslem's nature prevails by means of love:
The Moslem, if he be not loving, is an infidel,
Upon God depends his seeing and not-seeing,
His eating, drinking, and sleeping.
In his will that which God wills becomes
lost 1325
"How shall a man believe this saying ?..."
He encamps in the field of "There is no god
but Allah".
In the world he is a witness to mankind...
His high estate is attested by the Prophet who
was sent to men and Jinn—
The most truthful of witnesses 1330
Leave words and seek that spiritual state,
Shed the light of God o'er the darkness of
thy deeds
Albeit clad in kingly robe, live as a dervish,
Live wakeful and mediating of God !
Whatever thou dost let it be thine

aim therein to draw nigh to God, 1335
That his glory may be made manifest by thee.
Peace becomes an evil, if its object be
aught else ;
War is good if its subject is God.
If God be not exalted by our swords,
War dishonours the people. 1340
The holy Sheikh Miyan Mir Wali...[1]
By the light of whose soul every
hidden thing was revealed—
His feet were firmly planted on the path of
Mohammed,
He was a flute for the impassioned music
of love,
And causes the beams of true religion
to shine on us.
Heaven stooped its brow to his threshold,
The Emperor of India was one of his disciples...[2]
Now, this monarch had sown the seed
of ambition in his heart
And was resolved on conquest. 1350
The flames of vain desire were alight in him.
He was teaching his sword to ask, "Is
there any more?...[3]
In the Deccan was a great noise of war,

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1. A celebrated Moslem saint, who died at Lahore in A .D. 1635.
2. Shahjahan.
3. Koran ch. 50 v. 29.

His army stood on the battlefield.
He went to the Sheikh of heaven-high dignity 1355
That he might receive his blessing:
The Moslem turns from this world to God
And strengthens policy with prayer.
The Sheikh made no answer to the Emperor's speech.
The assembly of dervishes was all ears, 1360
Until a disciple, in his hand a silver coin,
Opened his lips and broke the silence,
Saying "Accept this poor offering from me,
O guide of them that have lost the way to God !
My limbs were bathed in sweat of labour 1365
Before I put away a dirhem in my skirt."
The Sheikh said. "This money ought to be given to our Sultan,
Who is a beggar wearing the raiment of a king.
Though he holds sway over sun, moon, and stars,
Our emperor is the most penniless of mankind. 1370
His eye is fixed on the table of strangers,
The fire of his hunger hath consumed a whole world.
His sword is followed by famine and plague,
His building lays a wide waste.
The folk are crying out because of his indigence; 1375
His empty-handedness causes him to plunder

the weak.
His power is an enemy to all
Humankind are the caravan and he the brigand.
In his self-delusion and ignorance
He calls pillage by the name of empire 1380
Both the royal troops and those of the enemy
Are cloven in twain by the sword of his hunger.
The beggar's hunger consumes his own soul.
But the sultan's hunger destroys state and
religion.
Whoso shall draw the sword for anything
except Allah, 1385
His sword is sheathed in his own breast."

XVI

Precepts written for the Moslems of India by
Mir Najat Nakshband, who is generally known
as Baba Sahra'i .[1]

O THOU that hast grown from earth, like a rose,
Thou too art born of the womb of Self.
Do not abandon Self ! Persist herein !
Be a drop of water and drink up the ocean ! 1390
Glowing with the light of Self as thou art,
Make self strong, and thou wilt endure.
Thou gett'st profit from this trade,
Thou gain'st riches by preserving this
commodity.

1 This appears to be a pseudonym assumed by the author.

Thou art being, and art thou afraid of not-
being? 1395
Dear friend, thy understanding is at fault.
Since I am acquainted with the harmony of Life.
I will tell thee what is the secret of Life—
To sink into thyself like the pearl,
Then to emerge from thine inward
solitude; 1400
To collect sparks beneath the ashes,
And become a flame and dazzle men's eyes.
Go, burn the house of forty years' tribulation,
Move round thyself "Be a circling flame"
What is Life but to be freed from moving round
others 1405
And to regard thyself as the Holy Temple?
Beat thy wings and escape from the attraction
of Earth;
Like birds be safe from falling
Unless thou art a bird, thou wilt do
wisely
Not to build thy nest on the top of a cave. 1410
O thou that seekest to acquire knowledge,
I say o'er to thee the message of the Sage of
Rum...[1]
"Knowledge, if it lie on thy skin, is a snake;
Knowledge, if thou take it to heart, is a friend,"
Hast thou heard how the Master of Rum 1415
Gave lectures on philosophy at Aleppo?

1. Jalaluddin Rumi.

Fast in the bonds of intellectual proofs.
Drifting o'er the dark and stormy sea of
understanding;
A Moses unillumined by Love's Sinai,
Ignorant of Love and of Love's passion 1420
He discoursed on Scepticism and
Neoplatonism,
And strung many a brilliant pearl of metaphysic.
He unravelled the problems of the Peripatetics,
The light of his thought made clear whatever
was obscure.
Heaps of books lay around and in front of
him, 1425
And on his lips was the key to all their
mysteries.
Shams-i-Tabriz, directed by Kamal,[1]
Sought his way to the college of Jalaluddin
Rumi
And cried out, "What is all this noise and
babble?
What are all these syllogisms and judgment and
demonstrations?" 1430
"Peace O fool" exclaimed the Maulvi,
"Do not laugh at the doctrines of the sages.
Get thee out of my college !
This is argument and discussion: what hast

1. Baba Kamaluddin Jundi, for Shams-i-Tabriz and his relation to Jalaluddin Rumi see my *Selected Poems from the Divan-i-Shams-Tabriz (Cambridge, 1898).*

thou to do with it?
My discourse is beyond thy understanding 1435
It brightens the glass of perception."
These words increased the anger of
Shams-i-Tabriz.
And caused a fire to burst forth from his soul,
The lightning of his book fell on the earth,
And the glow of his breath made the dust spring
into flames. 1440
The spiritual fire burned the intellectual's stack.
And clean consumed the library of the
philosopher.
The Maulvi, being a stranger to Love's miracles
And unversed in Love's harmonies,
Cried, "How didst thou kindle this fire, 1445
Which hath burned the books of the
philosophers?"
The Sheikh answered "O unbelieving Moslem,
This is vision and ecstasy: what hast thou to do
with it?
My state is beyond thy thought,
My flame is the Alchemist's elixir 1450
Thou hast drawn thy substance from the snow
of philosophy,
The cloud of thy thought sheds nothing but
hailstones.
Kindle a fire in thy rubble,
Foster a flame in thy earth !
The Moslem's knowledge is perfected by
spiritual fervour, 1455

The meaning of Islam is *Renounce what shall pass away.*
When Abraham escaped from the bondage of "that which sets"[1]
He sat unhurt in the midst of flames...[2]
Thou hast cast knowledge of God behind thee
And squandered thy religion for the sake of a loaf. 1460
Thou art hot in pursuit of antimony,
Thou art unware of the blackness of thine own eye.
Seek the Fountain of Life from the sword's edge,
And the River of Paradise from the dragon's mouth.
Demand the Black stone from the door of the house of idols, 1465
And the musk-deer's bladder from a mad dog,
But do not seek the glow of Love from the knowledge of to-day,
Do not seek the nature of Truth from this infidel's cup !
Long have I been running to and fro,
Learning the secrets of the New Knowledge. 1470
Its gardeners have put me to the trial
And have made me intimate with their roses.

---

1. Abraham refused to worship the sun, moon, and stars, saying, "I love not them that set" (Koran ch 6, v. 76).
2. See p. 91 note.

Roses! Tulips, rather, that warn one not to
smell them—
Like paper roses, a mirage of perfume.
Since this garden ceased to enthrall me 1475
I have nested on the Paradisal tree.
Modern knowledge is the greatest blind—
Idol-worshiping, idol-selling, idol-making!
Shackled in the prison of phenomena,
It has not overleaped the limits of the
sensible 1480
It has fallen down in crossing the bridge of Life,
It has laid the knife to its own throat
Its fire is cold as the flame of the tulip;
Its flames are frozen like hail.
Its nature remains untouched by the glow of
Love, 1485
It is ever engaged in joyless search,
Love is the Plato that heals the sicknesses
of the mind :[1]
The mind's melancholy is cured by its lancet.
The whole world bows in adoration to Love,
Love is the Mahmud that conquers the
Somnath of intellect[2] 1490
Modern science lacks this old wine in its cup,
Its nights are not loud with passionate prayer.
Thou hast misprized thine own cypress

1. In the *Masnavi* Love is called "the physician of our pride and self-conceit, our Plato and our Galen"
2. The famous Idol of Somnath was destroyed by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna.

And deemed tall the cypress of others.
Like the reed, thou hast emptied thyself
of Self 1495
And given thine heart to the music of others
O thou that begg'st morsels from
another's table,
Wilt thou seek thine own kind in
another's shop?
The Moslem's assembly place is burned up
by the lamps of strangers,
His mosque is consumed by the sparks of
monasticism. 1500
When the deer fled from the sacred
territory of Mecca,
The hunter's arrow pierced her side.[1]
The leaves of the rose are scattered,
like its scent:
O thou that hast fled from thy Self,
come back to it!
O trustee of the wisdom of the Koran, 1505
Find thy lost unity again!
We, who keep the gate of the citadel of Islam
Have become unbelievers by neglecting the
watchword of Islam.
The ancient Saki's bowl is shattered,
The wine-party of the Hijaz is broken up. 1510
The Ka'ba is filled with our idols,
Infidelity mocks at our Islam.

1. The pilgrims are forbidden to kill game.

Our Sheikh hath gambled Islam away for love
of idols
And made a rosary of the *zunnar.*[1]
Our spiritual directors owe their rank
to their white hairs 1515
And are the laughing-stock of children
in the street,
Their hearts bear no impress of the Faith.
But house the idols of sensuality.
Every long-haired fellow wears the
garb of a dervish—
Alas for these traffickers in religion ! 1520
Day and night they are travelling about
with disciples,
Insensible to the great needs of Islam,
Their eyes are without light, like the narcissus;
Their breast devoid of spiritual wealth.
Preachers and Sufis, all worship worldliness
alike; 1525
The prestige of the pure religion is ruined.
Our preacher fixed his eyes on the pagoda
And the mufti of the Faith sold his verdict.
After this, O friends, what are we to do?
Our guide turns his face towards the
wine-house. 1530

1. See p. 110, note.

XVII

Time is a sword.

GREEN be the holy grave of Shafi'i,[1]
Whose wine hath cheered a whole world !
His thought plucked a star from heaven:
He named Time "a cutting sword."
How shall I say what is the secret of this
sword? 1535
In its flashing edge there is life.
Its owner is exalted above hope and fear,
His hand is whiter than the hand of Moses.
At one stroke thereof water gushes from the rock,
And the sea becomes land from dearth of
moisture. 1540
Moses held this sword in his hand,
Therefore he wrought more than man may
contrive.
He clove the Red Sea asunder
And made its waters like dry earth.
The arm of Ali, the conqueror of Khaibar, 1545
Drew its strength from this same sword.
The revolution of the sky is worth seeing,
The change of day and night is worth
observing.[2]

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1. Founder of one of the four great Mohammedan Schools of Law.
2. I.e. turn your attention to the nature and meaning of Time.

Look O thou enthralled by Yesterday and
To-morrow,
Behold another world in thine own heart ! 1550
Thou hast sown the seed of darkness in thy
clay,
Thou hast imagined Time as a line.
Thy thought measures length of Time
With the measure of night and day.
Thou mak'st this line a girdle on thine infidel
waist; 1555
Thou art an advertiser of falsehood, like idols.
Thou wert the Elixir, and thou hast become a
speck of dust;
Thou wert born the conscience of Truth, and
thou hast become a lie !
Art thou a Moslem? Then cast off this girdle !
Be a candle to the feast of the religion of
the free ! 1590
Knowing not the origin of Time,
Thou art ignorant of everlasting Life.
How long wilt thou be a thrall of night and day?
Learn the mystery of Time from the words
"I have a time with God."[1]
Phenomena arise from the march of Time, 1565
Life is one of Time's mysteries.

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1. The Prophet said "I have a time with God of such sort, that neither angel nor prophet is my peer", meaning (if we interpret his words according to the sense of this passage) that he felt himself to be timeless.

The cause of Time is not the revolution of
the sun:
Time is everlasting, but the sun does not last for
ever.
Time is joy and sorrow, festival and fast;
Time is the secret of moonlight and
sunlight. 1570
Thou hast extended Time, like Space,
And distinguished Yesterday from To-morrow.
Thou hast fled, like a scent, from thine own
hand.
Our Time which has neither beginning nor
end 1575
Blossoms from the flower-bed of our mind.
To know its root quickens the living with new
life:
Its being is more splendid than the dawn.
Life is of Time, and Time is of Life:
"Do not abuse Time" was the command of the
Prophet...[1] 1580
Oh, the memory of those days when Time's
sword
Was allied with the strength of our hands.[2]
We sowed the seed of religion in men's hearts
And unveiled the face of Truth;
Our nails tore loose the knot of this world. 1585

1. The Prophet is reported to have said, "Do not abuse Time, for Time is God."
2. The glorious days when Islam first set out to convert and conquer the world.

Our bowing in prayer gave blessings to the earth.
From the jar of Truth we made rosy wine gush
forth,
We charged against the ancient taverns.
O thou in whose cup is old wine
A wine so hot that the glass is well-nigh
turned to water, 1590
Wilt thou in thy pride and arrogance
and self-conceit
Taunt us with our emptiness?
Our cup, too, hath graced the symposium;
Our breast hath owned a spirit.
The new age with all its glories 1595
Hath risen from the dust of our feet.
Our blood hath watered God's harvest,
All worshippers of God are our debtors.
The *takbir* was our gift to the world,
Ka'bas were built of our clay 1600
By means of us God taught the Koran,
From our hand He dispensed his bounty
Although crown and signet have
passed from us,
Do not look with contempt on our beggarliness!
In thine eyes we are good for nothing, 1605
Thinking old thoughts, despicable.
We have honour from "there is no god
but Allah"
We are the protectors of the universe,

1. The *takbir* is the cry "*Allah akbar*", "Allah is most great."

Freed from the vexation of to-day and
to-morrow,
We have pledged ourselves to love One. 1610
We are the conscience hidden in God's heart,
We are the heirs of Moses and Aaron.
Sun and moon are still bright with our radiance,
Lightning-flashes still lurk in our cloud.
In our essence Divinity is mirrored: 1615
The Moslem's being is one of the signs of God.

XVIII

An invocation.

O THOU that art as the soul in the
body of the universe,
Thou art our soul and thou art ever
fleeing from us.
Thou breathest music into Life's lute;
Life envies Death when death is for thy sake 1620
Once more bring comfort to our sad hearts,
Once more dwell in our breasts !
Once more demand from us the sacrifice
of name and fame.
Strengthen our weak love ;
We are oft complaining of destiny,
Thou art of great price and we have naught.
Hide not thy fair face from the empty-handed !
Sell cheap the love of Salman and Bilal ![1]

1. Salman was a Persian, Bilal an Abyssinian. Both had been slaves and were devoted henchmen of the Prophet.

Give us the sleepless eyes and the
passionate heart!
Give us again the nature of quick silver!
Show unto us one of thy manifest signs,
That the necks of our enemies may be bowed!
Make this chaff a mountain crested with fire,
Burn with our fire all that is not God!
When the people of Islam let the thread of
Unity go from their hands, 1635
They fell into a hundred mazes.
We are dispersed like stars in the world;
Though of the same family, we are
strange to one another.
Bind again these scattered leaves,
Revive the law of love! 1640
Take us back to serve thee as of old,
Commit thy cause to them that love thee!
We are travellers: give us resignation as
our goal!
Give us the strong faith of Abraham!
Make us know the meaning of "there is no God,"
Make us acquainted with the mystery
of "except Allah"!
I who burn like a candle for the sake of others
Teach myself to weep like the candle.
O God a tear that is heart-enkindling,
Passionful, wrung forth by pain,
peace-consuming, 1650
May I sow in the garden, and may it
grow into fire

That washes away the fire brand from
the tulip's robe !
My heart is with yestereve, my eye is
on to-morrow:
Amidst the company I am alone
"Every one fancies he is my friend, 1655
But none ever sought the secrets within
my soul."
Oh, where in the wide world is my comrade?
I am the Bush of Sinai; where is my Moses?
I am tyrannous, I have done many a wrong to
myself,
I have nourished a flame in my bosom, 1660
A flame that burnt to ashes the wares
of understanding
Cast fire on the skirt of discretion,
Lessened with madness the proud reason,
And inflamed the very being of knowledge;
Its blaze enthrones the sun in the sky 1665
And lightnings encircle it with adoration
for ever.
Mine eye fell to weeping; like dew,
Since I was entrusted with that hidden fire.
I taught the candle to burn openly,
While I myself burned unseen by the
world's eyes. 1670
At last flames burst forth from every hair of me,
Fire dropped from the veins of my thought:
My nightingale picked up the spark-grains
And created a fire-tempered song.

The breast of this age is without a heart.
Majnun quivers with pain because
Laila's howdah is empty.
It is not easy for the candle to throb alone:
Ah, is there no moth worthy of me ?
How long shall I wait for one to share my
grief?
How long must I search for a confidant? 1680
O thou whose face lends light to the moon and
the stars,
Withdraw thy fire from my soul !
Take back what Thou hast put in my breast.
Remove the stabbing radiance from my mirror,
Or give me one old comrade 1685
To be the mirror of mine all-burning love !
In the sea wave tosses side by side with wave:
Each hath a partner in its emotion.
In heaven star consorts with star,
And the bright moon lays her head on the knees
of Night, 1690
Morning touches Night's dark side,
And To-day throws itself against To-morrow.
One river loses its being in another,
A waft of air dies in perfume.
There is dancing in every nook of the
wilderness, 1695
Madman dances with madman.
Because in thine essence Thou art single,
Thou hast evolved for Thyself a whole world.
I am as the tulip of the field,

In the midst of a company I am alone. 1700
I beg of Thy grace a sympathising friend,
And adept in the mysteries of my nature,
A friend endowed with madness and wisdom,
One that knoweth not the phantom of vain
things,
That I may confide my lament to his soul 1705
And see again my face in his heart.
His image I will mould of mine own clay,
I will be to him both idol and worshipper.

AFTERWORD

THE HUMANISM OF MOHAMMAD IQBAL

by

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On his big brow there was an anxious knot. His eyes, though raised beyond the immediate environment, were dipped, as though turned inwards. The cast of his solemn face was relieved by a delicate smile, which rose above the determined chin. As he caressed his brief moustache and spoke a verse, the face became animated into a discreet good humoured indulgence of the follies of his listeners.

I recall the sensation of Dr. Iqbal's vivid personality from my first visit to him as a young student-aspirant to poetry. As I sat shyly away, *salaaming* him, he looked at me furtively, in between his talk with Sir Abdul Qadir, who was dressed in an English suit and fez cap. After some banter with Mohammad Din Taseer, the young poet, he asked his servant to get some *nimboo pani*. And he pulled me up on to the dais and sat me down beside Taseer. I said I had a friend and his sister-in-law waiting outside. Whereupon he himself got up and fetched them. 'The young need not hide in corners and leave

the stage only to Sir Abdul Qadir !' he said. I felt encouraged by that remark to say: 'I have brought *some poems—calf love poems'. And I looked towards* Yasmin. 'If the calf is that lovely girl, bless you both !' 'I was born a Hindu', I said, 'and she is a Muslim'. 'That is just the kind of union I want' the Poet said. 'As for your poems, why not recite one'. I dipped my eyes, but no poem emerged into my diffused head. My friend, Noor, suggested that Yasmin recite one of Dr. Iqbal's own poems. After a little whispered persuasion, the girl recited the famous poem about the 'orphan boy'. I got the gift of a signed copy of *Bang-i-Dara* from the poet before we left, and he invited me to come back again when he would have had time to look at my poems.

This first impression of the humanness of the poet Iqbal when I went to see him in the year 1923, was to remain with me forever. And as I went back quite a few times, the impression was confirmed that, beyond his learning and the great legend, he retained a warm Punjabi heart. By sheer coincidence, my mother came from the Sialkot district and took me to visit his family, thus connecting me with the inner household. Later, the poet got to know that I had been wrongly implicated in a terrorist bomb case and secured my release, by arguing my conspiracy in his role as Barrister. And when Yasmin was married off as the third wife of a railway guard (who ulti-

mately murdered her), the poet saw my predicament and gave me part of the money to buy a fare to London to go and study philosophy.

He warned me: 'The vital life is more important than philosophical concepts!' And those words remained an echo in my head, when I decided, ultimately not to teach academic systems but to turn to creative writing.

I have deliberately mentioned these personal details, not through any sense of vanity, but to indicate what to me is the essence of Iqbal's life and work—his humanism.

(2)

If I can recall any one book which may have meant to me more than others, I would like to say that *Asrar-i Khudi* (which I always kept in my bag wherever I went for years), is a treasure into which I have dug deep. In fact, all through my philosophical studies, specially into the sceptical thought of David Hume and Bertrand Russell, and the scientists Heisenberg, Einstein and Schroedinger, I returned to the *Asrar* to integrate myself. For, in this long poem, Iqbal evolved a new idea of man, resilient, vital and integral.

On my various homecomings, from the West, I remember that the pilgrimage to the poet's house was one of the few reassuring experiences of our broken time.

Quite a few friends told me that I had misplaced my trust in a man 'who had changed so many colours'.

I heard some of the Indian philosophers say that 'he had betrayed India' and 'not based himself on Hindu thought' in restating the perennial philosophies; and that he was looking towards Arabia always, because he depended on the *Koran* for confirmation of his own hunches. Dr. Satchianand Sinha quoted him to say: 'I confess to be a Pan-Islamist', a charge which was proved to me to be malicious, because there is obviously an undercurrent of influence of certain aspects of the Vedantic Self-Consciousness in Iqbal's thought.

But his own co-religionists accused him of non-conformism, because Iqbal said that there is to be no judgement day at the end of life, but, that 'every day is a judgement day'. Also, his attack on the organised static faiths was interpreted by the Mullahs as an 'attack' on Islam, as well as on the rival faiths.

Then there were those who accused him 'of exalting Nietzche's Superman', because he had incorporated some of the latter's parables from *Thus Spake Zaruthushtra* in his own poems and exalted the 'Perfect Man.'

And, ultimately, when in utter disillusionment against Hindu reaction, he lent his support to Mohammad Ali Jinnah, from his own genuine

belief in a utopian pure Islamic state, he was dubbed a 'rank communalist'. One might as well call Gandhi a promoter of the Rashtriya Sevak Sangh, because the Mahatma insisted on calling himself 'a Sanatani Hindu'.

There is no doubt that there are contradictions in Iqbal's thinking, inconsistencies, divided opinions, but, like Walt Whitman, he would say: 'Yes, I contradict myself! I contain multitudes'.

It is important in understanding the essence of his *contribution, to go back to the central* theme, which pre-occupied him all his life—the predicament of man himself in our time.

(3)

It is well known that, in the later half of the 19th century, after the failure of the Indian feudalists to stem the British power, both the Hindu and the Muslim communities were in a state of utter demoralisation. The alien power won over the Hindu intelligentsia, to a large extent, to collaboration. As the Muslims were allied in the minds of the conquerors with the last remnants of Mughal rule, the Sarkar punished them heavily. The policy of *Divide-et-Impera* was, however, used. The Hindus were pampered in one area. The Muslims were exalted in another. But both were disenfranchised, decimated and deprived of their heritages by the introduction of the English

language in the Universities, and the promotion of a 'renaissance learning' (albeit in garbled forms), in a world which had once rich treasure in the classical Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian languages.

The continuity of indigenous cultures had, of course, been broken by the ritualisation of daily life through the practice of rank superstition and ugly *dasturs*, like caste among the Hindus, and the seventytwo warring sects in Islam, as well as child marriage, polygamy and ritual murder by the faithful of both the organised faiths. Dead habits, repetition of old mantras, and *Suras*, and low-minded quarrels about doctrines, and untouchability of one man against the other, had reduced Indian civilisation to shambles. It was darkest dark Asia of the feudal period, again.

In the various crises of cultures, which prevailed over the subcontinent, some of the Hindu renascent figures, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his friends in the Brahmo Samaj, not only made efforts to drink from the more vital streams of the past, but also looked towards the Thames and the Seine for sustenance.

For sometime the Muslims sulked and did not partake, in large numbers, of the new education system. Later, however, Sir Syed Ahmed founded the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh. And the Muslim intelligentsia rallied to the need for the search of a possible new life.

The primary inspiration for noticing the crisis of conscience had come to the Muslims from the great poem of Altaj Hussain Hali, called *Mussadas*, which had given a call for resurgence after narrating the breakdown of Islamic tradition and the consequent decay.

(4)

It is likely that Mohammad Iqbal, born in 1876 in Sialkot, Punjab, and educated at Lahore, received the impact of Hali, before he went to study in Cambridge and Munich. Already, he had seen, as a young man, the reduction of human beings to abjectness, through the existentialist idea of resignation to the will of God by the mosques, the temples and the churches. The virtue of initiating human beings into contemplation of life, which had been once the prerogative of the schools attached to the shrines, had disappeared. Debate had become a kind of 'Original Sin'. The content of life could not be discussed objectively. The spirit of man seemed to have dissolved itself in vague negations—nihilism, despair and indifference were the undertones of poetry, which had become escapist versification for skillful tying of one line to another.

No wonder, then, that Iqbal repudiated his own early empty verses and went off to look for inspiration in the debates of the West, in

order to get a grip on the problems of existence.

After studying with the British idealist professors, Mactaggart and James Ward, in Cambridge, he went to Munich and began to research in Persian Metaphysics.

In Germany, Kant had proposed that the assertion of 'self-will' by a person makes for a total man and the sanctions for a moral order lay according to him in the injunction: 'You ought to do what you ought to do'. Later, Hegel had suggested that Man has meaning only in terms of 'Universal Self-will' the sum of all self-wills is the universe. These concepts had tended to be questioned through the pessimistic acceptance of the world as illusion, by Schopenhauer under the influence of Hindu thought. But there were other more positive attitudes—of Goethe, Schiller, Fichte. And there were the challenging ideas of Nietzche, who asserted the need for wholeness and coherence through reawakening, by the lightning and frenzy of the life impulse itself to raise man from Being to Becoming. The discipline of struggle makes man pre-eminent. Virtue consists, in overcoming vice. There is a rhythmic pattern of the ebb and flow of life—exhaustion and renewal, systole and diastole. In the face of the tragedy he suggested the alliance with the rhythm of life considering the world in the Indian sense as *Lila* play.

Iqbal acquired through his presence in

Germany at that time, the importance of concentrating on Nietzche's positive emphasis on existence—the preoccupation with 'being-in-a-situation' but with a view to struggle through constant tension of opposite thought. If in Nietzche's case, the tension was due to the German's rejection of the supine suffering of Christianity, Iqbal began to reject decadent Islam in favour of the constant 'burning and melting' of the spirit in the Sufi poets of Islam.

In the research for his thesis on the *Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, he had gone carefully into the diverse strains of poetry. He felt that the seeds of disruption had been laid by those Arabic poets, who had begun to rely on tradition, and resigned themselves to the will of Allah. He was drawn to the genius of Al Ghazali as against the traditionalists for a time but rejected him for his orthodoxy. Also he critically admired Avicenna, in spite of the fact, that this primitivist scientist believed in the dissolution of the human intellect in the intelligence of God, as the Supreme felicity, because Iqbal was dazzled by the emphasis of Avicenna on dynamic movement, as the inner core of the Universe, as against the prevalent view of static mass. And he felt pride that an Asiatic philosopher had taught Galileo how to measure the speed of light.

It was in the Sufi poet Jalal-ud-din Rumi that he saw an organic faith in the capacity of man to

ascend to the highest illuminations. And he got confirmation in the poet of Konya for the idea of Nietzche that the deepening of the ego cannot take place merely *through knowledge,* but also *through experience of knowledge*, or rather through the integration of the life of feeling, thought and will.

Iqbal had already echoes in his mind of the Hindu evolutionary idea of growth from the vegetable, animal to human consciousness, which had probably also influenced Rumi. He realised how Goethe in his *West-Ostlicher Diwan,* written in answer to *Diwan* of the poet Hafiz, had seized upon the return to nature for unity, wholeness and infinitude. Further, he found in the author of *Faust*, the heroic idea that: 'You ascend step by step from simple to the more complex organisations, in order, finally, to construct genetically from the materials of the whole edifice of nature, the most complex of all—MAN'. And Iqbal was inspired by Goethe's faith in the 'naive poet'.

(5)

On his return to Lahore he taught philosophy for a while in the University, practiced law, but began to recite certain poems which implied condemnation of the moral stagnation and anaesthesia of the intelligentsia.

He sang: A life of ceaseless strife is better than perpetual peace;

The dove becomes a falcon when struggling
under a snare,
Ye know not but prostration...

Again, he asserted that man's glory consists in innovation:

Moon and stars do what they had been
doing;
But man thinks and feels and acts,

And he denied God:

What is philosophy and what is poetry after
all?
Words of yearning which can't be expressed
in thy presence...

The young poets of India awakened to the new voice. Poetry could not be mere 'opium eating'. The symbolist idea of 'art for art's sake', said Iqbal, 'was an invention to cheat us of life-giving energies!' 'The end of all human activity is life', he suggested, even as Tagore had said about the same time that 'all expression is exuberance'.

The legend of the iconoclast spread quickly. His autobiographical phrase was repeated from mouth to mouth:

Look at me, for in Hind thou wilt not see
again,

A man of Brahmin extraction versed in the mystic lore of Rumi and Tabriz.

And people remembered his early poem the *Naya Shawala:*

Thou art looking after this garden, so find a remedy for disunity,
This pestilential air has destroyed all the shrubbery.

(6)

Soon, during the year 1915, all his tempestuous thoughts were interwoven in the long poem *Asrar-i-Khudi.* The poet had tried to create the very rhythms, here, of the processes by which the will is able, by restless striving, to move and, by defying the obstructions of indifference and the dull unauthentic life, discards sentiment, and vulgar attachment, and achieves Insight.

He had departed from the sentimental Urdu poetry to dramatic expressionism. His method of revelation about the making of self is by using metaphors of the breaking of self. He recreates the flow of the river, which comes from the sources in the mountain with the metaphor that water flows down to the oceans. Sometimes, he is troubled about the formidable task, because, indeed, he is a pioneer bard among the routine poets:

> My heart is with yestereve, my eye is on tomorrow;
> Amidst the company I am alone.

And he was to find that many poets of his generation resented his criticism of Hafiz for preaching withdrawal from action.

What, then, is Iqbal's philosophy of the ego? The answer Iqbal gives is:

Ego is life.

And if we press him further, he answers:

Self making.

In fact, like Nietzche, he said:

> That Life is ever transformed into light by the flame.

And, of course, the manifestation of this flame is in the individual: 'The highest form is the ego in that the individual becomes a self contained centre'.

This individual is part of nature, the ultimate principle of life, or the complete ego.

The individual has free will.

And everything can develop to the full possibility of growth.

Only man has to gain mastery over the environment and possess the highest consciousness.

There are three characteristics of the self: It is not mere body, bound in space, but man lives in time, and he is uniquely himself in every being. In the words of Iqbal:

> The form of existence is an effect of the Self;
> Whatsoever thou seest is a secret of the Self;
> When the Self awoke to consciousness,
> It revealed the universe of Thought.
> A hundred worlds are hidden in its essence:
> Self-affirmation brings Not-self to light.

By the Self the seed of opposition is sown in the world:

> It imagines itself to be other than itself.
> It makes from itself the forms of others.
> In order to multiply the pleasure of strife.
> Inasmuch as the life of the universe comes from the power of the Self,
> Life is in proportion to this power.
> Because the earth is firmly based on itself,
> The captive moon goes round it constantly.

The being of the sun is stronger than that of the earth:

> Therefore is the earth fascinated by the sun's eye.
> Thus man absorbs the universe unto himself
> Generating desire, fixing goals and ever allying

hi mself with creation.

Inevitably, the process of becoming is not schematic. *Language itself cannot coherently* describe the process. The poet can, perhaps, see the polarities of the visible and invisible tension. Says Iqbal: 'If the state of tension is not maintained relaxation will ensue.'

In saying this he was probably influenced by Bergson. For, he asserts that the intellect alone may not be able to grasp the heart of the remote, to discover the outside in the inside. And thus he invokes *freedom of the* quest *in the* state of the heart's tension, which may raise us to the heights of perfection.

This concept of man's evolution is also somewhat akin to Milton's in *Paradise Lost:*

Man's nourishment by gradual scales
  sublimed,
To vital spirits aspire,
To animal—to intellectual

Except, that Iqbal would have objected to the blind bard's idea of the 'intellectual'. He conceived man as the centre of the universe and the final cause. Indeed, he took to Rumi's glorification of the 'perfect man', as he who is transported into the dream world of vision and ecstasy through love and not through reason.

He sings:

> The luminous point whose name is the Self
> Is the life-spark beneath our dust.
> By love it is made more lasting,
> More living, more burning, more glowing.
> Transmute thy handful of earth into gold
> Kiss the threshold of a perfect Man

Man realises this love through acceptance of pure desire as against the vulgar indulgences:

> O Self-respecting Asia, your time is fast coming;
> The greed for gold and silver has sapped the spirit of Western nations.

The rejection of the allurements of the unauthentic life requires courage, physical and moral, not to submit to evil or fear or weakness:

> Let love burn all thy doubts,
> Be subservient only to truth
> Which will turn thee into a lion.

To be sure, this courage is not just foolhardiness: 'The principle of ego-sustaining deed is respect for the ego, in myself as well as in others'.

And this implies tolerance.

Iqbal also feels that man cannot be fully human, if he acquires everything by inheritance:

Be ashamed if you want to inherit a Ruby
from your forebears
This cannot give the pleasure that lies in
looking for the Ruby.

And this self-search involves the creative imagination, in so far as consciousness lies in the communion between the seen and the unseen, between oneself and others, in the active perpetuation of connection, or participation, which is LOVE.

The poet rejected cravenness, beggary, slavery and the empty boast: 'My father was a Sultan', or the sentiment 'I am of the Chosen people !'

According to Iqbal, Man has to evolve human relations. For the individual cannot be part of the collective without some rules. Thus, there is the need for restraint, if one is to become the real ruler of society in the kingdom of God on earth—God being man himself. And, from this point of view, Iqbal seeks in the *Koran* the inspiration for the kind of democracy which Mohammed had preached, to be based on sharing.

In so far as the *Asrar-i-Khudi* traces the process of renewal of man as self-maker, self-breaker and self-preserver, Iqbal becomes the prophet of a new concept of man put forward in the India of his time. To wrest Godhood from traditional thought and imbue Man in his human person, was the boldest expression of a self-confidence in our

struggling subcontinent. To recover for man the freedom of choice in the phrase: 'In making of self is the making of God', Iqbal extended Kant's idea of the imposition of Self on Nature. 'You created the night, but then I made the lamp'.

And thus he made the space-time continuance part of human consciousness and man became the extension of nature itself.

Beauty trembled when a seeking heart arose,
When a Seer was born !
Nature was worried when she saw that, out of
mere clay, a self-builder,
A critic has come into being.

All the elements are thus part of creative evolution inspired by man himself. He dispossesses himself of God's will in man's growth:

Why did you order my expulsion from
paradise.
Now wait for me ! I have work to finish.

And this man is not an abstraction worshipped in the books of philosophy. He is the poet who enters the fray and pits his mind and heart against all that is inhuman and strives to renew the world, to make it a possible habitation for the evolution of man:

Make yourself reach out so high,
  that before each creation
Providence is constrained to ask—
  what is your wish.

The poet, then, whose voice is inspired by love expresses himself in willed extroversion, the beauty and terror of life, absorbs reason and burns and melts, in the mellow light—he is the harbinger of the future which is contained in his present.

The poet amplified his vision in other books of poems, *Zabur-i-Ajam*, *Javed Nama*, *Bal-i-Jibril*. Essentially, however, *Asrar-i-Khudi* remains the poetical manifesto of Iqbal's humanism.